

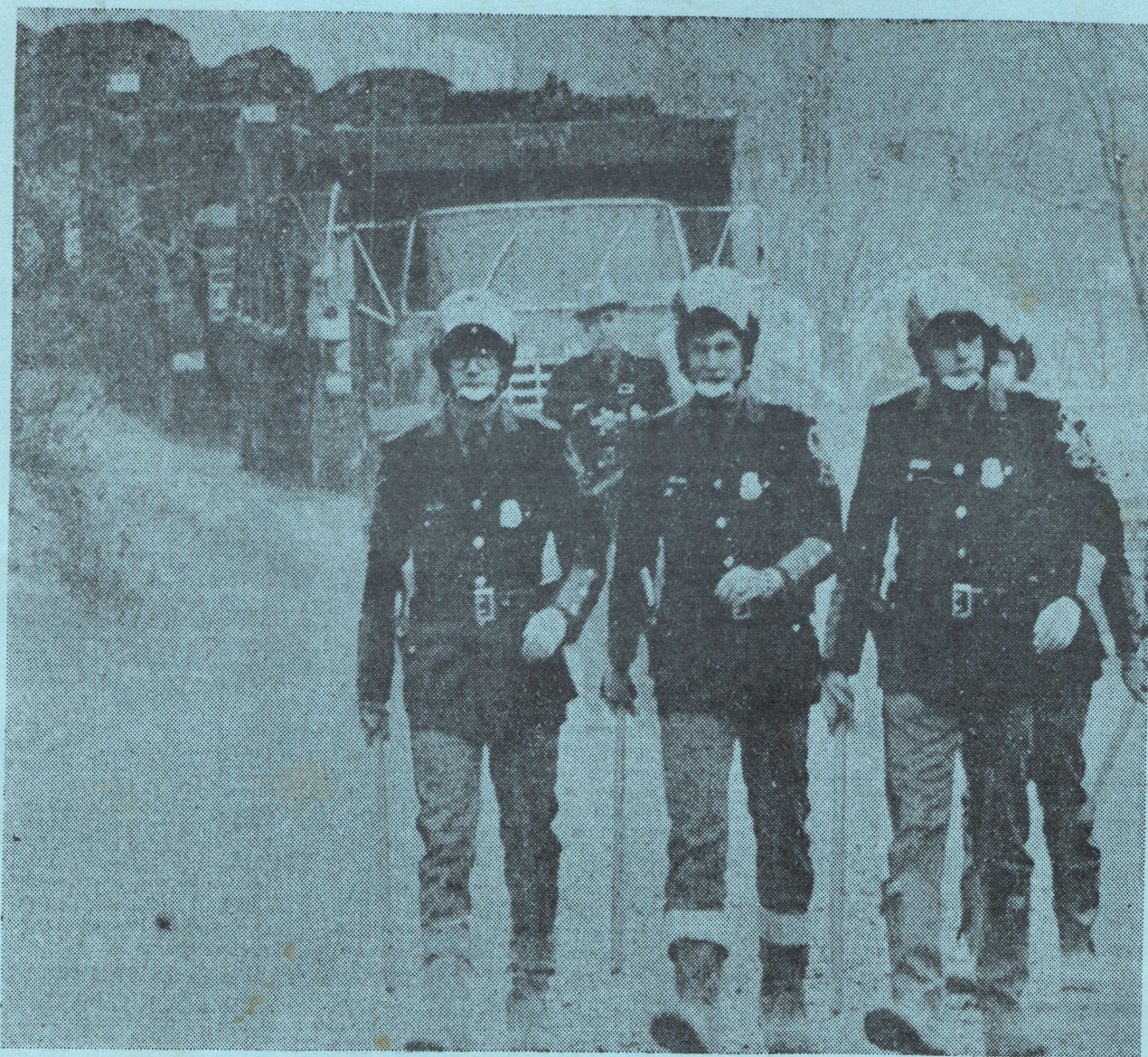
# Internationalism

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**Coal strike • Beyond partial struggles • Furor over  
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State troopers escort scab coal past striking miners



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# EDITORIAL

## BEYOND PARTIAL STRUGGLE

The working class world-wide is faced with the urgent necessity to see beyond the partial struggles of the moment to the total political and social revolution which is its historic task. Partial struggles against some of the worst aspects of life under capitalist domination are both necessary and inevitable. However, by themselves such partial struggles are insufficient to improve the condition of the working class or humanity generally. The revolutionary class struggle is not the simple sum of any given number of partial struggles. The proletariat must engage in revolutionary activity consciously.

Partial struggles are struggles of the proletariat that do not transcend purely local, sectional or economic arenas. Examples of such struggles would include a strike which remains confined to one company or industry, such as the recent miners' strike, or a tenants' struggle in a working class district in which workers resist rent increases or a deterioration of services which are part and parcel of an attack on their standard of living. These struggles must not be confused with compartmentalized struggles.

Compartmentalized struggles are interclassist and by their nature divert the proletariat from its class terrain. Examples of such compartmentalized struggles would include "black liberation struggles" which concern themselves with the plight of a mythical black nation, as if the black workers should be concerned about the trials and tribulations of the black bourgeois elements in their battle to get a "fair share" of the means of exploitation, or "women's struggles" which attack males as the "enemy" and obscure, or deny, the unity of working class women and men. Partial struggles are the soil from which class consciousness develops; compartmentalized struggles are necessarily a graveyard for the working class.

Partial struggles can and do provide elements of the working class with important experiences which help to make clear the need for socialist revolution. But the left of capital knows that by channeling the combativity of the workers into compartmentalized struggles and away from total revolution, the slavery of the proletariat can be maintained.

These compartmentalized struggles that the leftists like to foist on the proletariat are everywhere and always doomed to failure in this period. Lasting reforms of any type are impossible in the period of capitalist decadence. When capitalism was an expanding system, it was possible to wrest significant reforms from the bourgeoisie as the result of mass struggle. As ruthless as capitalism was in this period in the manner in which it exploited workers, it was a progressive system in the sense that it acted to

further the development of the forces of production and created the one class in history that has the power to destroy all forms of exploitative relations once and for all-- the modern proletariat. By the onset of the 20th century, however, capitalism ceased to be a progressive system and became a fetter on the further development of the forces of production. The saturation of the world market and the tendential fall in the rate of profit took their toll. Capitalism entered its decadent phase; it was ready for the proletariat to sweep it aside. The only way that one national capital could expand now was at the expense of another. Ultimately, this meant imperialist war -- which erupted in 1914.

The proletariat in the early 20th century was trapped in the Second International and the unions which were controlled by social chauvinists who quickly forsook the revolutionary principles to which they had paid only lip-service and quickly crossed over to the side of the bourgeoisie when the pressures of imperialist rivalries culminated in the outbreak of world war. A revolutionary wave did begin in Russia in 1917 and spread across Europe, with echoes in America and Canada, but was finally extinguished in China in 1927 in defeat for the proletariat. Mankind has paid a terrible price for this failure. The only way capitalism can survive in decadence is to condemn humanity to a cycle of crisis - war - reconstruction - and crisis again, as it periodically redivides the world market, destroys surplus product and surplus lives to lay the basis for a historically short period of so-called prosperity.

The open crisis of capitalism re-emerged in the Sixties with the conclusion of the post World War II reconstruction period. International capitalist competition becomes ever more cut-throat. Unemployment festers and expands throughout the world. Tensions between the two main imperialist blocs -- the American and the Russian -- flare up with each bloc less and less inclined or able to give an inch. The ultimate capitalist response to this deepening crisis-- the next phase in the cycle -- will be the same as before: imperialist world war. The stepped up military production in the US budget is but a portent of the preparations for war which the bourgeoisie will be forced to make.

The only thing standing in the way of a path toward war is the world proletariat.

The proletariat today is undefeated. New generations of workers whose consciousness has not been marred by the defeats of forty and fifty years ago (the crushing of the revolutionary wave and the preponderance of



the ideologies of trade unionism and anti-fascism which tied the class to the bourgeois state as it prepared for war) have moved to the center stage of history. Today, even many older workers do not bear the scars of the dark period of proletarian defeat.

To prepare for war, the state must resort to extreme measures of totalitarian social control and introduce militarization of labor. To do this, the working class must be defeated politically and ideologically, as it was prior to both imperialist world wars. The states of the Eastern and Western blocs have begun to strengthen their hand -- on the one hand, to gird themselves for the unavoidable militant response of the working class to the inevitable attacks on their standard of living, and, on the other, to lay the groundwork for re-enforcing the war economy.

In all candor, it must be noted that thus far the response of the proletariat, while generally combative in both blocs, does not reflect the depths of the crisis, nor a recognition of its irreversible character. The choice today is the same as it has been since the end of capitalism's ascendancy: war or revolution.

In the face of the crucial confrontations that lie ahead, the left and leftists will champion compartmentalized struggles for women's rights, cultural and ethnic rights, gay rights, union democracy-- everything but proletarian revolution -- in order to steer the working class from the path of revolution. Revolutionaries must participate in and support partial struggles of the proletariat, pointing out that the grievances that trigger such struggles are just one instant in the clash between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and that only through revolution will the foundation be laid for building a humane society. The task of revolutionaries in a partial struggle is to help generalize and politicize it, breaking the limitations of sectionalism and localism. In regard to compartmentalized struggles, revolutionaries must intervene to denounce their interclassist nature, to expose the counter-revolutionary role of the leftists and destroy their influence on the working class. Unless there is greater clarity on the nature of the present juncture on the part of the working class, the setting for defeat may be prepared.

--INTERNATIONALISM

## COAL- **CLASS STRUGGLE IN A UNION STRAIT-JACKET**

The coal industry has been torn by intense labor unrest for the past nine months. Last summer a wildcat strike erupted when the union announced severe cutbacks in the medical benefits program and spread across the coalfields, eventually involving over 80,000 miners. More recently, the industry has been paralyzed by a 111 day "official" contract strike, the longest in industry's history. The miners' struggle is indicative of rising combativity in the working class. It demonstrates a number of strengths and weaknesses which must be assessed by the revolutionary workers' movement. The role of revolutionaries is not to tail-end the class or act as strike cheerleaders but to help the class to assimilate the lessons of its struggle in order to further the development of revolutionary class consciousness. This requires that both the positive and negative aspects of the strike, as well as their context be examined so that the maximum possible may be learned.

### THE BACKGROUND

The prospects for a long contract strike were set in the wildcat against the union's cutbacks in medical coverage. The union was only able to end the wildcat by promising to abrogate the contract early and call a nationwide official strike if the Bitum-

inous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) would not allow funds to be transferred from a financially solid benefits program to the "ailing" health program. The miners returned to work but the tenuous control of the union over the rank-and-file was obvious.

This lack of control stemmed from dissatisfaction with the 1974 contract in which the union signed away the highly-prized right-to-strike over local grievances. The total ineffectiveness of the formal grievance procedures resulted in a massive wildcat only eight months after the contract ratification. In fact, BCOA companies were hit by 8,900 illegal wildcat strikes and loss of 62 million tons of coal production during the life of the 1974 agreement. Given the discontent in the ranks, the union convention last summer was forced to make the right-to-strike clause a prerequisite to ratification of any new contract. To this non-negotiable demand were added the restoration and guarantee of free medical coverage and the equalization of pension benefits for miners who had retired prior to 1976 with those who retired afterwards.

The United Mine Workers (UMW) had to walk a tight-rope between putting forward a sufficiently militant image to retain control over the workers, and assuring that the demands



the workers went out for (in contrast to the union's own interests) were not met. During the period between the end of the wildcat strike in September and the beginning of the official strike on December 6, the power industry and other major coal consumers stockpiled 90 days worth of coal in order to minimize the impact of the strike. This method of neutralizing a strike had already been successfully used against the rubber workers and iron ore miners in the Mesabi range in previous strikes. Stockpiling allows industry to outlast strikes, destroys the potential economic impact of strikes and sets the preconditions under which long strikes are mainly used to exhaust and demoralize the workers. Workers are permitted to "vent" their rage in a way that hurts only them and their families and allows unions to derail combativity and maintain control over the workforce.

But the miners surprised the union, BCOA and the state. They lasted long enough to have a major impact on the mid-west where some power companies were forced to curtail power output by 30 to 50% and industry was forced to cutback consumption.

The need for the restoration of labor discipline in the coal industry was a high priority for the Carter administration because of the increased emphasis it places on coal as an important source of fuel. The government's energy program has as a central goal US independence in energy. Even though the major OPEC countries are firmly in the US bloc, the key to US military superiority requires self-sufficiency in major areas such as steel and fuel. This policy is also being followed by the Russians who are expanding their own domestic fuel production and is a crucial part of measures to strengthen the war economy in both nations. The Carter energy plan calls for an increase in coal production from its present level of 700 million tons per year to 1.2 billion tons in 1985. Standing smack in the middle of these plans are the miners who cost the operators over 20 million tons in production last year alone because of strikes. Without labor stability, increased production is impossible.

In order to restore discipline, BCOA negotiators tried to include contract language providing for summary firings of workers spreading wildcat strikes to other mines and \$20-per-day fines for workers respecting such picketlines. Union executives were inclined to accept this proposal, as well as ignoring rank-and-file demands on the other key issues. This first agreement provoked such open hostility in the ranks that it was rejected by the Bargaining Council by a 30 to 6 margin.

A second tentative agreement which promised 37% in wage increases over three years, modified its anti-wildcat provisions to call only for the dismissal of strike "instigators." It also set a \$700 total deductible for medical benefits. While this called for the workers to lose their previous free medical coverage, it maintained union con-

trol over a multi-million dollar trust fund. Despite Bargaining Council approval and open support by President Carter, who threatened to invoke a back-to-work injunction under the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act or authorize a government seizure of the mines if the contract were defeated, the workers rejected the agreement by a 2 to 1 margin.

When Carter finally invoked the Taft-Hartley Act, the miners responded by ignoring the court order. The BCOA was forced to recognize that it would be impossible to impose contract language outlawing wildcat strikes. A new head negotiator for the industry, Nicholas Camicia, was brought in who re-affirmed the role of the union in maintaining labor discipline. "We are better off with a national contract...A strong union on a national basis returns better labor in the mines than a lot of smaller units," said Camicia. "We are for a strong union."

The third contract which was finally accepted by the strike-weary miners drops all anti-wildcat provisions and decreases medical deductibles to nothing for hospitalization and a maximum of \$200 for medicine and doctors' fees. Pensioners who retired prior to 1976 will get a \$25 increase immediately to a maximum of \$275 compared to the average of \$420 for those who retired after 1976. The contract also provides for production incentives which miners predict will result in a significantly higher incidence of accidents.

The role of the union in the miners' strike clearly demonstrates what the ICC has repeatedly said about the nature of trade unions in the period of capitalist decadence. Unions are no longer organs of working class self-defense, but have become integrated into the capitalist state apparatus, and are used to maintain labor discipline, derail class struggle and mystify the workers. That the strike lasted as long as it did is testimony to the militancy of the workers who resisted as long as they could against the union's repeated efforts to impose capitalism's austerity program.

#### THE BALANCE SHEET

On the positive side:

1) Despite union propaganda that the existence of the union was at stake, the strike was clearly a fight for working class interests against the companies, the union, and the state, though not without lingering confusions. The continued tenuous character of the union's control over the workforce is apparent. At every step of the way the union was prepared to acquiesce to the needs of the national capital and the miners' resistance was militant and steadfast. While the miners have flouted the Taft-Hartley Act before, previous confrontations were firmly under the autocratic control of John L. Lewis and the union. In the late 40s



the UMW and other industrial unions were forced by rank-and-file pressure to defy the law, the better to control their members. But the current defiance of Taft-Hartley took place outside and against union control. While this is encouraging, many miners indicated that they would return to work if the government siezed the mines. This reflects persistent confusion on the role of the government and a belief that if the gov't. opened the operators' books it would realize that the companies could afford to meet the strikers' demands.

2) The focus on non-wage demands demonstrates the workers' understanding that their entire standard of living is under attack. The refusal to be bought off by apparent significant wage increases shows that the miners recognized that such raises are completely illusory and soon eaten up by inflation. In making their basic demands -- medical benefits, pension equalization and wildcat strikes -- non-negotiable, they indicate the basic contradiction in class interest of the working class and the bourgeoisie. This was not a let's-get-whatever-we-can strike, but a clash between irreconcilable class interests. Adherence to non-negotiable demands is a significant development in the American working class, especially as capitalism attempts to take back benefits and gains won in earlier periods, as can be seen in Lockheed, auto and the municipal negotiations in New York City.

3) The strong solidarity with the pensioners is also an unusual and positive development. It illustrates a break in the dividing line capitalism draws between the working and the non-working within the proletariat. This partially results from the fact that many generations of a given family have been miners, and hence many currently working miners have family members who are pensioners. Nevertheless, the solidarity shown with the retirees is something that must stand as an example of class unity for the rest of the working class.

On the negative side:

1) The corporatist nature of the strike was a serious drawback. Despite the militancy of the miners, the strike remained a "coal miners' exclusive." There were no attempts to generalize the strike to other sectors of the working class. While miners in Indiana blocked railroad tracks to halt delivery of scab coal, they did not appeal to railroad workers for support. There was no independent support offered by other workers to the miners. Displays of solidarity were organized by other unions, such as the United Steel Workers, Auto Workers and the Hospital Workers, on a union-to-union basis. Solidarity campaigns organized by leftists were geared toward supporting the miners in "their" struggle, accepting and accentuating the sectional aspects of the strike. This type of "solidarity" is not the solidarity of class struggle which can transform a strike in one indus-

try into a class-wide strike against the capitalist state, but reduces the concept of solidarity to mutual assistance in isolated, legal strikes. Only striking farmers, who are not workers, offered direct support on a struggle-to-struggle basis, but it is not clear whether the farmers were more interested in getting press coverage for their on-going fight against low prices and "foreign" competition than in supporting a proletarian struggle.

The corporatism of the strike played into the hands of the state which sought to use the strike as a wedge to further divide the working class along sectional lines. Miners who permitted themselves to be isolated from the rest of the class were set up as the scape goats for suffering, lay-offs, and industrial shutdowns. Steel workers, who have had the threat of impending lay-offs hanging over their heads for the last year, suddenly had someone to blame: the miners whose long hold-out was "causing" lay-offs. The bourgeois media continually harped on the "special" character of the miners as compared to the rest of the working class. The miners were cast as a special case, descendants of the pioneers, rugged individuals of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon origin somehow naturally more independent than other workers. Perhaps the highly militant miners of Poland, Romania and Spain also have Anglo-Saxon or Celtic forebears, or perhaps it is the conditions of work where basic survival depends on their fellow workers that makes miners the world over a particularly combative lot.

2) Tremendous confusions on the nature of the union continue. Despite rejection of the national leadership, union influence has not been destroyed. Although the rejected contract was denounced as industry-dictated, the union was only castigated as being weak in its dealings with the bosses. Local leaders like those of District 17 maintained the credibility of the union. The effectiveness of the local leadership opens the door to the ability to steer miners into a dump-Miller reform movement.

3) Lack of Autonomous struggle. A corollary of the continued confusion on the union question is the lack of autonomous struggle. However militant the miners have proven themselves to be, they have yet to take their struggle completely outside the bounds of the union. No strike committees or assemblies were established. There were relatively few mass actions. Those that did occur were called by local leaders, leftists or were ad hoc, one-shot affairs. It is absolutely essential that workers organize independently of the union. Without autonomy, militancy is not enough. In the 1919 strike wave, miners did organize autonomous strike committees in opposition to the resistance of the UMW. While miners in the Illinois coalfields sought to spread that strike, the union sent goons to act as strikebreakers and attack roving pickets. These strike committees spread from localities to state lev-



els representing 90,000 strikers. It is this hidden history of autonomous struggle which will be dealt with in a coming issue of Internationalism.

4) Confusions on the nature of the bourgeois state persist. The miners still do not understand that the state is their enemy. While the Taft-Hartley injunction was ignored in terms of its back-to-work order, workers respected its strictures against illegal picketing. Widespread sentiment indicated that many workers would have welcomed a government takeover of the mines, believing that the state would give them a better deal. In a given situation, depending on the balance of forces, the state may put pressure on an individual capitalist or industry to settle a labor dispute, but it does so only from the viewpoint of the interests of the national capital, not the workers'.

The struggle in the coalfields was an important one. Whatever its weaknesses, the strike has demonstrated the combativeness of the working class and an ability to hold-out when the stakes are high. The bourgeoisie is already concerned that workers in the teamsters and other important industries with contracts due to expire next year will emulate the miners' intransigence and likewise scoff at the Taft-Hartley injunction and government pleas for reasonableness. It is absolutely essential that the working class learn from the shortcomings of this strike. To forge the consciousness necessary for tomorrow's struggles, the working class must remove the union strait-jacket that binds it to struggling on the terrain of capitalism. -- E. Mett

## Unemployed Workers and Class Struggle

Massive unemployment on a global scale is one of the most obvious signs of the present acute economic crisis affecting capitalism. While the specific demands raised by unemployed workers in their struggles may appear to be different than those made by employed workers, jobless workers are part of the working class.

Workers do not lose their identity as workers by losing their jobs. Nor do unemployed workers have separate interests from those of the employed. If a worker is unemployed, he is potentially at work; if he is working, he is potentially unemployed. It is the working class as a social, collective whole that produces surplus value, not as isolated individuals. The division between unemployed and employed workers does not make them different classes, any more than the division between different job categories. The vital need of the class is to fight in a unified way to destroy the separations capital imposes on the class and the crisis exacerbates. Unemployed workers are an integral part of the working class, for the condition of unemployment is intrinsically linked to the general condition of the working class. Class consciousness develops in the proletariat as a whole, and thereby proceeds both among the employed and unemployed as a whole going beyond the divisions within the class. In many cases, jobless workers are the most militant elements, confronting the bourgeoisie frontally, since they have nothing to "defend" in their social condition.

In the 19th century a pool of unemployed constituted an "industrial reserve army" serving as both a pressure to keep wages low and as a source of immediately available labor for industrial expansion. But unemployment today is different. In the period of capitalist decadence, large scale unemployment is an expression of capitalism's inability to develop the productive forces. While in some

instances the threat of lay-offs may serve to short-circuit outbreaks of militant class struggles, today large-scale unemployment is a burden for the bourgeoisie, politically and financially. Continued massive unemployment poses the danger of political unrest. To ward off this potential discontent, the bourgeoisie has made ample use of various forms of welfare and unemployment benefits. This "relief" serves to pacify and neutralize unemployed workers. It has worked well to mask the real state of things, but it has one serious drawback for capitalism -- the cost. While it has been well-worth the price, the crisis has forced the bourgeoisie to adopt a program of austerity and this affects all workers, from the coal miners to the jobless workers throughout the country. As unemployment continues and spreads at the same time that the ruling class continues its attack on the standard of living of unemployed workers, it is likely to result in defensive actions by unemployed workers.

Revolutionaries cannot develop a correct perspective on these upcoming struggles without an understanding of previous class experience in this area. The tactic of containment thru "relief" is not new. The Great Depression schooled the American bourgeois state in the most effective means to calm civil disorder stemming from large-scale unemployment.

Initially, the Hoover administration ignored the problem of unemployment, trusting that private charity and relief agencies would deal with what the bourgeoisie anticipated would be a short-lived economic downturn. Such optimism was ill-advised. Between 1928 and 1933 unemployment escalated to include 15 million people, despite promises of economic rejuvenation. US gross national product dropped from \$82 billion in 1929 to \$40 billion in 1932, and production fell by 50%. Unemployment grew by leaps and bounds, and the per-



spective of years of protracted impoverishment was faced by millions of working class families.

This massive army of unemployed didn't passively accept being ignored. Action committees were formed spontaneously in cities throughout the US. Groups of unemployed workers roamed through working class neighborhoods physically stopping marshals from carrying out evictions of tenants unable to pay their rents. These groups did not hesitate to use violence to stop the henchmen of bourgeois law and order from throwing proletarian families into the street. In other instances, local relief offices were stormed by large numbers of people demanding funds.

As these experiences indicate, unemployed workers may lose the weapon of the strike, but they gain the weapon of the street. As unemployment persisted, the bourgeoisie in that period of the Depression also imposed wage cuts on those who remained at work. This, in turn, fostered protest strikes in which the appearance of unemployed workers in support of striking workers demonstrated a nascent proletarian solidarity breaking down the barriers capital attempts to erect between those on the dole and those "lucky" enough to have a job.

The preliminary requirement of the dictatorship of capital is the prevention of class consciousness and class unity. Among the employed workers, the unions maintain separation and disunity according to industry, trade, skill, etc. Among the unemployed, it is the left which specializes in splitting the class by emphasizing the specific interests of jobless workers and ignoring the common interests of the class as a whole. And the left is always the first to call for separate and distinct organizations of the unemployed. The role of the left during the 30's in organizing unemployed workers illustrates their affiliation to capital. In every instance in the US where the immediate and spontaneous reaction of the class to unemployment was the creation of independent action committees, members of the Socialist and Communist parties soon captured leadership and tamed these organizations of class struggle, which was exactly what the bourgeoisie needed. The left changed the nature of these groups and made them a vehicle for electoral politics. With the aid of Roosevelt's "liberal" relief machinery, they succeeded in diverting the action committees from disruptive and militant tactics and integrated them into the state apparatus. Under the expert tutelage of the left, these groups became the auxiliary staff of the relief bureaucracy. At a certain point, unemployed organizations were officially co-opted as complaint processing and screening agencies for the state! By submerging organizations of the unemployed into the state apparatus, the left helped divide the working class and halted the beginnings of a deepening class consciousness.

Roosevelt's New Deal was a way of binding

the working class to the state by presenting the state as a friend of the working class. This illusion persists to this day, as evidenced by calls from wide-ranging sources for the establishment of federal jobs programs. However, despite great promises of vast government employment in the form of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Projects Administration, the government provided the minimum number of jobs necessary to defuse a potentially explosive situation. A count made by the Bureau of the Census in 1937 showed that all federal emergency workers accounted for only 18% of the total number of unemployed that year. As soon as the unemployed workers had been neutralized politically, such programs quickly evaporated. Their only lasting impact was to give the bourgeoisie much needed experience in the militarization of labor as the war economy of the Thirties progressed and the coming imperialist war grew closer.

Today, as the problem of unemployment intensifies, regardless of what the bourgeoisie's manipulation of statistics indicates, unemployed workers will form spontaneous organizations in which it will be necessary for revolutionaries to participate. In contrast to strike committees and assemblies which arise in the heat of struggle and must disband after struggle dissipates or face integration into the state as a new form of unionism, unemployed committees will inevitably have a more permanent character. This flows from the fact that unemployment tends to be a permanent condition. One must distinguish between genuine organizations of the working class and those artificially manufactured by the leftists. Revolutionaries must participate in the former, linking the interests of the unemployed with all sectors of the working class, but denounce the latter as an attempt to divide the working class and channel it onto a bourgeois terrain.

--Tellurian



# PROLETARIAN PERSPECTIVE ON RACISM— **FUROR OVER BAKKE**

The Bakke case has exploded on the US like a bombshell. The bourgeois media, including the leftist press, has whipped up an emotional hysteria around the case. Supposedly the "further progress" of black Americans hangs in the balance. But ultimately, the furor over Bakke is a smokescreen. Which ever way the Supreme Court rules - for or against preferential hiring and admissions programs for members of various racial and ethnic minorities who have been historically subjected to discrimination - the concrete conditions of life for working people black, yellow, white, brown will not be improved one iota.

No matter how the Supreme Court rules, there will be only one winner in the Bakke case, and that is the bourgeoisie - because no matter what the ruling, the bourgeoisie will have once again been successful in splitting black and white workers, derailing them into a confrontation with each other rather than the real enemy, capitalism.

This is an important issue, an emotional one, and is one with which the revolutionary movement must come to grips. In order to understand the proletarian perspective on racism, it is necessary to put aside the legalistic details of the court case itself, and get to the heart of the matter.

## RACISM: DIVIDING THE CLASS AGAINST ITSELF

Racism has always been a major tool of the dominant class in keeping the exploited divided amongst themselves so that they are unable to confront the exploiters directly. Today, capitalism uses racism to divide the working class not only in the US but throughout the world. The ruling class prefers it when racial, ethnic and national differences are stressed. This promotes divisiveness within the proletariat and inhibits the development of proletarian consciousness.

The rise of various forms of ethnic consciousness has accompanied the acceleration of the open crisis of capitalism in recent years. Black nationalism is not the only example. The emergence of Polish, Italian and other "ethnic consciousness" and the re-emergence of zionism amongst Jewish youth in the United States is a desirable development from the bourgeois perspective. For the bourgeoisie it is better that large segments of the working class turn inwards towards ethnic heritage and emphasize the differences from others, rather than turn outward and see the fundamental unity of workers throughout the world. This same phenomenon is manifest in the Buy America campaigns, the clamor about illegal aliens and charges of Japanese dumping of steel and electronic commodities on the American market.

In contrast to this bourgeois ideology which stresses the unity of ethnic and racial groups across class lines and denies the fundamental unity of black and white workers, revolutionaries understand that there is only one working class. Revolutionaries reject such notions as the "black working class" or the "white working class" as bourgeois attempts to divide the class against itself. There is only one working class, and it is an international class that lives in many countries, speaks many languages and has varying skin colorations. But it is one class because workers everywhere must sell their labor power to survive, are exploited by the bosses and produce the goods to make society run. Despite certain historical specificities in each nation-state that effect the unfolding of the class struggle, the problems of all workers throughout the world are inherently the same.

Anything that weakens the unity of the working class - whether white racism or black nationalism - is a victory for the bourgeoisie. It is the unity of the working class against capital and for the socialist revolution that revolutionaries must fight for, not advances for a few individuals, or even 10,000 - that is not the job of revolutionaries.

## DECADENCE AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REFORM

The problems of discrimination and its ideology racism, like a host of other problems that afflict society today, cannot be solved under capitalism. With capitalism's entrance into its decadent phase, lasting reforms are impossible.

In the past ten years since the re-emergence of the open crisis of capitalism, unemployment has grown steadily and the bourgeoisie has been forced to resort to austerity measures in its attack on the working class. The bourgeoisie has no leeway to provide "reforms" that cost it anything. In response to the militant black struggles that shook the US in the 60's, the only way that capitalism could even appear to make amends for past discrimination was by giving black workers jobs previously held by white workers. The adoption of this program of preferential treatment and resulting discontent among white workers also enabled the bourgeoisie to keep the class divided against itself. While unemployment hovers at the 10% level for months on end, the ruling class smiles to itself as black and white workers squabble amongst themselves for jobs in a shrinking labor market.

## DISCRIMINATION: WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

Despite what the new leftist advocates of the "white skin privilege" theory and its



offshoots claim, the bourgeoisie and not the workers are responsible for the merciless racial oppression to which blacks have been subjected for centuries. If white workers have been infected by racist, bourgeois ideology, they are still by no means responsible for bourgeois rule. No matter how much workers may be infected by bourgeois nationalist ideology it is the bourgeoisie that is always responsible for imperialist war. The same is true for discrimination. One does not make the bourgeoisie pay for hundreds of years of racial oppression by giving blacks jobs at the expense of white workers. That is not a reform of capitalism. It merely makes one segment of the proletariat pay for the crimes of the bourgeoisie. The only way to rid humanity of the atrocities of racial oppression is by the destruction of the capitalist system.

#### THE MYTH OF BLACK PROGRESS

Despite all the clamor about black progress, the bourgeoisie has only given the appearance of helping black workers. Despite all the alleged concessions and progress that followed on the heels of the massive ghetto rebellions of the sixties, there has been an actual deterioration in the living conditions of black working people. The gap in median family income for whites and blacks has increased from \$4100 in 1967 to \$6294 in 1977, (and the Bureau of Labor Statistics warns that the most recent figure seriously underestimates the number of poor blacks). In terms of percentages, there has been virtually no improvement. Blacks' median income has consistently stood at 59-60% of white median income throughout the so-called years of progress. If we keep in mind that some black workers have indeed been given access to better paying jobs in industries like telephone, steel, auto and construction, and others granted admission to high paying professions, the fact that there has been no improvement in the median income percentage only accentuates the increased impoverishment of the remainder of the black working class. The effects of this impoverishment are readily observable. Unemployment is rampant in the ghetto, consistently running double the rate for whites. Unemployment for black youth in general runs at 40% and last summer the figure for 16-21 year olds in New York City reached 80%. Thousands are not even included in official unemployment statistics because they have given up looking for jobs that do not exist. The black population is now firmly concentrated in the large decaying cities of the north, where they bear the brunt of municipal service cutbacks that flow from capitalist's austerity drive and where they suffer from deteriorating housing and an epidemic of crime. Only a cynic could survey the plight of black workers in America today and say that the last ten years have been characterized by "progress". The main problem in the ghetto is the existence of slums and widespread unemployment, which will exist as long as capitalism exists.

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE STATE

In adopting the affirmative action ploy, the

bourgeoisie has sought to contain the black workers' rebellion and keep it from politicizing and generalizing to the rest of the working class. The militance of black workers, if it managed to avoid the pitfalls of black nationalism, had the potential for sparking militant actions on the shop floor in major industries, and did so in some instances, especially in the auto industry.

Affirmative action represents the effort of the bourgeoisie to link the emerging black and hispanic bourgeois and professional strata to the state. The bourgeoisie has counted on these elements to lead the black workers away from class consciousness to a race consciousness, black nationalism, and tie them to the state politically and ideologically, and they have done this. As long as black workers identify with the race or the nation, and conceive of the government as their ally in the fight against racism, the working class is effectively divided against itself.

#### REVOLUTIONARIES AND RACISM

Revolutionaries reject so-called solutions to discrimination and racism which call upon the working class, white and black, to equally share the suffering imposed by capitalism. "Equal exploitation for all" is not a revolutionary solution, nor is it a slogan that revolutionaries can use. Nor are revolutionaries interested in guaranteeing equal access to the means of exploitation. Black workers do not benefit from being exploited by black bosses, or from opening up a few of the plums of capitalism like doctors, lawyers and insurance brokers.

Rather, revolutionaries call upon workers to unite and destroy the capitalist mode of production. Racism and discrimination can only be solved by the workers themselves in the struggle to destroy capitalism and in the building of a new society, not by the intervention of the bourgeois state, which has relied so heavily upon racism to keep the proletariat divided against itself. One might as well ask the bourgeois state to "outlaw" exploitation.

Revolutionaries participate in the class struggle, constantly pointing out the general line of march the class must follow to overturn capitalist rule. That general line of march does not lie in formulating false solutions to the problems that confront the class, but in stressing the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism as the very basis for the solution of social problems.

There are those who charge that the revolutionary approach we advocate does not take into account the harsh realities of the racial oppression that black workers have suffered under American capitalism, that we are in essence telling black workers they must "grin and bear it" until the overthrow of capitalism, that there is nothing they can do to ameliorate their conditions. Far from telling black workers to "grin and bear it" we are saying that they are absolutely right to rebel against the conditions under which



they are forced to live, but if they really want to change those conditions, they must realize the class nature of their oppression and that only revolutionary proletarian unity offers the basis for the world-wide destruction of capitalism, and the construction of a society free from exploitation and racism.

Because of the special oppression they have been subjected to, many black workers are rebellious and militant, and can be counted upon to be in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. But this is only possible if they successfully transcend the nationalist trap that the bourgeoisie has prepared for them. The opportunists and the racists on the left who think the black workers incapable of understanding class reality will continue to tail after black nationalism, but revolutionaries must always defend the basic unity of the class in struggle against capitalism.

Revolutionaries must always stand firmly for the solidarity of the working class and relentlessly oppose racism as a bourgeois ideology within the class. However, to expect that the class can be cleansed of racism prior to revolution is utopian. Racism, as a bourgeois ideology does not have to be, nor is it likely to be, eradicated before the revolution. As Engels pointed out, bourgeois ideology will be dominant within the class until the moment of revolution itself. Those who hold that racism must be destroyed and discrimination eliminated as the precondition for the development of revolutionary proletarian consciousness do not understand how such consciousness develops.

In the early years of this century, anti-semitism was rife in Russia, yet in the heat of the revolutionary struggle, it was the workers' councils that organized in 1905 to protect the Jewish community from the Black Hundreds and in 1917 outlawed anti-semitism as one of its first acts. If the Bolsheviks had waited until anti-semitism had been stamped out in the proletariat before calling for proletarian revolution, there never would have been a Russian Revolution.

It is the class struggle itself that provides the basis for confronting racism. It happens in a thousand shops in every city every day when workers who, in their role as private citizen may exhibit racist attitudes, will show their solidarity with black workers on the job when it comes to a showdown with the bosses. This is true whether it is in the steel mill in Pennsylvania where a black worker comes in drunk and his white co-workers, who may vehemently oppose school busing or "open" housing, will cover for him so he will not get in trouble with the foreman, or whether it is in the Bell System in Florida where white workers gang up on another white worker who informed on a black worker because "he was a nigger" and betrayed class solidarity. Without exaggerating the significance of any of these incidents, they do give us a glimpse of how the class struggle provides the basis through

which the divisiveness of racism can be overcome.

#### THE ROLE OF THE LEFTISTS

Now that we have explored some of the elements of a revolutionary proletarian perspective on racism, let us turn our attention to the response of the leftists to the Bakke case. As usual, the leftists have joined the hysteria whipped up by the bourgeois media and have served the bourgeoisie by misleading the working class and fostering bourgeois ideology within the class under the guise of "marxism".

Generally the leftists enthusiastically support affirmative action as the only way to compensate for past racial discrimination. Once again they have come down on the side of that faction of the bourgeoisie which is the embodiment of the tendency towards state capitalism, the totalitarian organization of civil society, austerity and the strengthened war economy. It is with this faction of the bourgeoisie that the leftists have entered into a de facto united front.

This solidarity with the "liberal" bourgeoisie is a further extension of the way the left always uses anti-fascism or the threat, real or imagined, of fascism to derail the class struggle of the workers and put it on a bourgeois terrain. For example, the Spartacist League wrote:

The social meaning of the Bakke case was most directly and ominously underlined this week by Nazis who carried the sign Bakke = White Power into an anti-Bakke demonstration. The Nazis know that a victory for Bakke is another defeat for the democratic rights of black and other minorities and women. They understand that Bakke has become the leading edge of a wave of racist reaction aimed at rolling back every gain made by blacks.

Never mind the illusory, non-existent nature of the "gains" blacks have made, or the impossibility of "democratic" gains under decadent capital today, the obvious political conclusion of this quotation is that one faction of capital, the "liberal" bourgeoisie, is better than the other. But the proletariat sees no qualitative difference between the factions of capitalist dictatorship. This lesson was learned in the blood of the Spanish proletariat in 1937. From the proletarian perspective the choice is not between factions of the exploiters, but between war or revolution.

Not only do the leftists mislead the workers that reforms are still possible, and hence strengthen the bourgeois ideology of reformism, but they continue their unabashed tailing after black nationalism, as they have for over a decade. The failure to confront the bourgeois nature of the black nationalist ideology constitutes condescension and even racism, not to mention opportunism. Blacks have suffered so much, runs the leftists' argument, it is acceptable that they turn to nationalism and are antagonistic towards white workers. Evidently the leftists



share the racist notion that black workers are not intelligent enough to adopt an accurate perspective on their predicament. In any case, the leftists refuse to do or say anything that the most vicious black nationalist might find objectionable. For example, the Trotskyist group Spark wrote that the "Really serious thing today about the Bakke case is that so many white workers want Bakke to win...This is a racist reaction". Elsewhere they say, "To win a better life the working class has to unify to fight the bosses - when we fight each other we can only lose". These words are certainly true enough, but Spark aims this admonition only at white workers, not all workers, especially not black workers. But if it is counter-revolutionary for white workers to believe that their jobs and security depend upon the discrimination against blacks, it is equally counter-revolutionary for black workers to think that their improved conditions depend upon taking jobs of white workers.

The Spartacist League has added a new wrinkle to the leftist obfuscation of the Bakke case. Not only does the SL denounce Bakke as the cutting edge of fascist reaction, but they also oppose affirmative action programs because they see such programs as an instance of state interference in the trade unions. Instead, they advocate preferential treatment administered by the unions. But as the ICC has repeatedly demonstrated, unions have long since been integrated into

the capitalist state apparatus and are used today primarily to discipline the workforce and maintain labor peace. When the rhetoric and Trotskyist dogma are put aside and one examines material reality, the SL is merely quibbling over which organ of the state should execute the bourgeois solution to discrimination, the unions versus the executive branch. The SL thesis that affirmative action is designed as an attack on the unions does not even make sense. The very elements of the bourgeoisie that are pursuing affirmative action are behind the current moves to strengthen unionization through labor code reform legislation currently before congress.\*

The problem of racism, particularly in the United States, cannot be minimized. It is the number one means that the bourgeoisie has and will continue to use to divide the proletariat against itself. It is a deeply emotional issue, and there are no short-cuts for the workers' movement to take in dealing with it. But one thing is absolutely certain: only the revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system offers the very basis for constructing a genuine human community free from the exploitation and oppressions of the past, including and especially racism.

Jerry Grevin

\*See "Unions to the Rescue" in Internationalism #14.

## The Feminist Myth

Feminism re-appeared in the Sixties, along with the present crisis, as a by-product of the student movement. At the present time, the conception that the working class is incapable of making a revolution is becoming more popular. Capitalism is considered as one of a number of "isms": racism, fascism, sexism, colonialism, militarism. In consequence, all sorts of "partial struggles" are proposed, which in fact constitute a double attack against the working class. On the one hand, "partial struggles" are an attempt to splinter the working class into groupings having no class character (blacks, homosexuals, women, etc...) in order to make the working class collaborate with the other classes.

On the other hand, they are an attempt to struggle for a thousand "reforms," which are impossible to achieve under capitalism, and which are a digression from the struggle for the destruction of capitalism itself.

### CLASSICAL FEMINISM

To the extent which feminism asserts that the principal characteristic of society is the division between the sexes, it constitutes

\*The "partial struggles" here referred to are the compartmentalized struggles discussed in our Editorial

utes a bourgeois ideology which hides the fundamental class character of society. This is why feminism and socialism have always been directly opposed. The workers' movement of the past understood that what was in question was not that women should acquire "equal rights" with men, but that bourgeois women acquire a right to domination equal to their husbands' and that working class women obtain the same "right" to be exploited as male proletarians. The workers' movement had as its goal the overthrow of an exploitative society based on "equal rights," called capitalism, and by so doing to overthrow all forms of oppression and discrimination.

In opposition to feminism, the workers' movement understood that it was not possible to build the relation between men and women on a really human base without radically overturning capitalist relations of production and founding a classless society -- Communism. Feminism misunderstood the meaning of class struggle, the only force capable of carrying out the radical overthrow of society.

Classical feminism never succeeded in enlisting the working class because it was always clear that feminism found itself on the side of the bourgeoisie. In capitalism's ascendant period, when the bourgeoisie could concede reforms to the working class, the entire workers' movement fought for improvements of the class' situation as a preparation for the future revolutionary struggle.



Feminists have always opposed this class struggle for reforms and the mass organization of the proletariat because these do not bring formal equality. The workers' movement has never aspired to purely formal rights within the framework of exploitation, or a participation in the bourgeois state apparatus. Revolutionaries of the workers' movement in that epoch, notably within the Social-Democracy, always considered the struggle for reforms as a preparation for the revolutionary struggle which would become necessary as soon as capitalism entered its decadent phase, and could no longer grant reforms. The struggle for reforms would permit the working class to unite its forces, to organize itself autonomously, to put pressure on the bourgeoisie in order to hasten the development of capital, thus approaching the moment of proletarian revolution.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE

With the outbreak of the First World War, capitalism had manifestly arrived at its decadent phase. This meant the impossibility of reforms, and necessitated the transition to direct revolutionary struggle on the part of the workers' movement. The old parliamentary and union apparatus of the Second International passed rapidly into the bourgeois camp in order to collaborate in the exploitation of the working class in the war industry and its massacre at the front.

Feminists, too, were enthusiastic for the "equal" integration of women into the war industry and for the glory of the nation. Women workers did not show much enthusiasm for the role that reformists and feminists had assigned to them, and took the same frontal attack as their class brothers. Thus, the strikes and mass demonstrations in the German war industry during the imperialist massacre was in large part provoked by the action of women workers. These movements were the precursors of the revolutionary wave which broke out after the war in Russia, German, Hungary, Bavaria and Italy, and which, for the first time, made capitalism tremble to its foundations.

The Third International was founded after the treason of the Second International in an attempt to save the revolution after the first defeats in central Europe, and called for mass organizations, as well as women's movements. Such organizations had been instruments of class struggle when capitalism was ascendant, but this "tactic" was already opposed in 1920 by revolutionaries as a serious error, as a misunderstanding of the present period of wars and revolutions. Although it has already led to defeat several times, this "tactic" is still defended today by the left of capital (Communist parties, Trotskyists, Maoists) who are frantically searching by means of these movements for a "mass base."

#### "SOCIALIST-FEMINISM"

Certain leftist organizations clearly show

their bourgeois nature by the fact that they are ready today to accept the same feminism which was always opposed by the workers' movement, under the condition that it adopt a "socialist" coloration. This "left" feminism, far from defending the interests of the proletariat and its unity in the struggle for socialism, becomes the apostle of division within the working class and perpetuates the illusions sown by leftists and the left about the nature of the so-called "socialist" countries. Thus, for the "socialist" feminists, the "socialist" countries continue the traditional distribution of roles between men and women. But there are no socialist countries. The countries these feminists ogle are simply state capitalist ones.

As defenders of state capitalism, the "socialist" feminists are incapable of seeing the link between state capitalism and the oppression of women. That is why they must fall heavily for the old classical feminist vision of a conspiracy of men against women. They are so much the less sensitive to the exploitation of the working class in these "socialist" countries.

Another argument of "socialist" feminists to demonstrate the necessity of a women's struggle besides the class struggle is the fact that the patriarchy (that is to say the pre-eminence of men) predates capitalism. Quite so, but other forms of exploitation, the state, the exchange of commodities existed well before capitalism and as characteristics of class society will disappear with capitalism, the same as all the other characteristics of exploiting societies which will disappear in communism.

In opposition to the struggle which bourgeois currents, such as feminism, defend, the proletarian struggle is not designed to obtain more rights vis-a-vis other classes, nor is it a struggle which leads to the establishment of a class society. The working class is the first exploited class which is revolutionary and which has therefore no interest in perpetuating itself as a class. The working class wishes, on the contrary, to abolish its condition as an exploited class by abolishing all classes and exploitation, by uprooting all the characteristics of exploitative society, such as all forms of discrimination, the exchange of commodities, the state and the bourgeois family.

As well as having a false conception of the "socialist" countries, socialism and the class struggle, these left feminists have a false conception of the character of the "left" organizations whom they reproach only for their attitude towards women. Against their anti-worker attitudes, they do not complain. They are themselves a vehicle of precisely the same mystifications.

#### FEMINISTS AND AUTONOMOUS STRUGGLES

The "socialist" feminists often speak of



the autonomous struggle of women, which they envision as a struggle detached from all types of organizations. When revolutionaries speak of autonomous struggle, they mean by that the struggle of the proletariat in its class organizations for its class objectives. The feminists, by contrast, attempt to break this unity of the working class, separating it into "men" and "women" and by inducing collaboration with other classes, as do all supporters of "partial" struggles (the ecology movement, racial struggles, youth, homosexual, nationalist and regional movements). Under the mask of autonomy, they try to derail the proletarian struggle from its class terrain by transforming, for example, a workers' strike into a struggle for the "liberation" of women.

Conversely, all sorts of struggles are presented as anti-capitalist. Thus, the struggle for the right to abortion is often presented as an autonomous struggle of women, as a struggle for a fundamental right of women, or even as an anti-capitalist struggle. The bourgeoisie has always been able to obtain illegal abortions. It is certainly not an accident if the working class obtains the immense privilege of having abortions in times of crisis and unemployment. The left wing of the bourgeoisie sees in abortion a means of reducing the necessary costs of maintaining the lives of a growing mass of workers which it can no longer exploit, while the right wing clings like grim death to petty bourgeois conceptions of the 19th century. The realization of this type of "reform" is totally dependent on the imperatives of capital in decadence.

#### IMPERIALIST FEMINISM

Feminists render their greatest service to capitalism in time of war. It is then that the great ideas of feminism become reality. When the national capital has sent a large part of the proletariat to the battlefield to be massacred in the interests of the nation, it is ready to impose the yoke of exploitation on women. The feminists, like their grandmothers during the First World War, celebrate the temporary enchainment of women in wage slavery as the liberation of women from housework. The "socialist" tint of the "socialist" feminist ideology has enabled them to support the Stalinists and Trotskyists of the Second World War under the mask of the defense of the Russian "workers'" state and anti-fascism. At this moment, the "socialist" feminists are already showing the true meaning of their great ideal of equality when they praise to the sky the role of women in all sorts of "national liberation" movements. It is the equality of the dead on the battlefield of the inter-imperialist struggle between the great powers.

The sad end of "socialist" feminism, as all other bourgeois ideologies, is to be able to realize their beautiful ideals only at the moment when capitalism has need of them. With the development of the war economy in which the bourgeoisie is today engaged, feminism is a very real mystification in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It must be opposed as such.

O. and K.

(translated from Internationalisme #14)

## THE MIDDLE EAST: THE BLOODY ROAD TO A PAX AMERICANA

The vicissitudes of the direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt, the obstacles to convening a new Geneva conference, and the frantic pace of visits to Washington by Begin, Dayan and Sadat, are so many signs of how difficult the road is to a Pax Americana in the Middle East. But while the road may be difficult, not since the mid-1950's has American imperialism been so close to undisputed hegemony in this vital region. As American power in the Middle East has grown over the past decade, the relationship between the US and Israel has undergone a profound change. American imperialism, which unreservedly backed Israel in the Six Day War (1967) and thus made possible the conquest of the Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights, prevented a clear-cut Israeli victory and occupation of the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War (1973). And

today American imperialism is determined to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the very territories which Washington made it possible for Israel to conquer in the first place! These tactical shifts in the policy of US imperialism must not obscure the unchanging strategy which Washington has pursued throughout these years: the removal of Russian influence from the Middle East and the establishment of an undisputed Pax Americana in the region.

As countries firmly in the American bloc, like Saudi Arabia, have become regional powers in their own right, as countries like Egypt and Sudan have moved from the Russian bloc firmly into the American camp, and as countries like Syria have begun to detach themselves from the Russian embrace in order to come under increas-



ing American influence, Israel has ceased to be the very lynchpin of US imperialism in the Middle East. In 1967 war between Egypt and Israel was a war between the two imperialist blocs, and unconditional American support for Israel -- within the limits of a localized war -- was necessary to halt the Russian wave which was rolling over the Middle East. In 1973, however, as Russian backing again proved impotent to assure an Egyptian victory over Israel, Washington began the process of replacing Moscow as the tutelary power over Egypt by calling a halt to further Israeli expansion in the Middle East. Today a war between Egypt and Israel would be a war between two countries, both of which are solidly within the American bloc and hence a disaster for Washington, and of benefit only to Moscow by leading to the detachment of one of the belligerents from its alliance with the US. Similarly, a new war between Israel and Syria would halt the process of switching from the Russian to the American camp which the Damascus regime has embarked upon.

The "peace" in the Middle East which the US is so intent on achieving, and which would signify the consolidation of American imperialism throughout the area, is but the prelude to new and even bigger inter-imperialist wars in other vital parts of the world. If the US is anxious to eliminate the danger of war in the Middle East not the least of its reasons is so that Egypt can assume her role as the gendarme of American imperialism in Africa. A peace settlement between Israel and the Arabs will make it possible for the well-equipped Egyptian military units now in Sinai to be available for service throughout the African continent -- from the Sahara to the Libyan desert, from the horn of Africa to the southern copper belt, wherever American interests are threatened.

#### THE FEROCIOUS IMPERIALIST APPETITES OF THE SMALL STATES

One of the greatest obstacles to a Pax Americana in the Middle East is the ferocity of the imperialist antagonisms between Washington's client states in the region. If Israel and Egypt are both solidly under the tutelage of American imperialism, this is not to say that they are mere puppets-- without national interests of their own to defend-- which Washington can manipulate at will. Syria can only extricate herself from the Russian bloc by incorporation into the American bloc. But Damascus still must fiercely pursue its own national interests. And in the epoch of decadent capitalism the national interests of even the smallest states, even of once oppressed peoples who achieved their "independence", are imperialist! This is a fact which the revolutionary marxists of the young Third International clearly recognized:

Within the framework of the capitalist system, any newly formed state which does not express the interests of the toiling masses but serves the interests of the bourgeoisie is a new instrument

of oppression and coercion, a new factor of war and violence...

Every newly-formed state would be drawn, by the very course of events and the iron logic of the laws of capitalist economy, into the vicious circle of militarism and imperialist politics...(V.M. Pavlovich at the Congress of the Peoples of the East, Baku, September, 1920)

The small capitalist states, unable to loot and plunder whole continents like their bigger mentors, must content themselves with the spoils of bits and pieces of the lands which straddle their borders. But if the scope of their imperialist ambitions is necessarily more restricted than that of the big states which vie for world dominion, the ferocity of the imperialist appetites of the small states is as great as the large. Indeed, lacking the technologically advanced economic means to ruthlessly exploit their victims, which the big imperialist states possess, the small states must satisfy their imperialist appetites by sacking villages and terrorizing and uprooting whole populations.

Nowhere has the imperialism of the small states been more brutally expressed than in the Middle East. The ideology of Zionism, which has animated modern Jewish nationalism, is imperialistic to the core. In 1919, at the Versailles Conference, Chaim Weizmann indicated the precise territory that Jewish nationalism demanded for its state of Israel: all of British mandated Palestine west of the Jordan River, as well as Lebanon south of the Litani River (including the headwaters of the Jordan and Mount Hermon), most of the Syrian Golan Heights and part of the Sinai.\* Ever since, this ambitious imperialist project for a Greater Israel has been single-mindedly pursued (despite momentary tactical compromises like acceptance of the UN's partition formula in 1948) first by the Jewish Agency and, after 1948, by the Israeli state.

Today, having militarily conquered virtually all the lands Weizmann claimed for the Jewish State, the Israeli bourgeoisie is feverishly debating both how to reconcile its ferocious imperialist appetite with the demands of American imperialism for an overall Arab-Israeli settlement, and how it can best digest this huge area with its Arab subject population. This last concern underlies the ongoing projects for Jewish settlement and the uprooting of the Arab population which Israeli imperialism has hatched. Thus in Galilee (the one part of Israel within its pre-1967 borders which is still overwhelmingly Arab) a project of expropriation of Arab land and "Judaization" is mercifully being pursued. Meanwhile, the Sharon Plan -- drafted by Israel's Minister of Agriculture and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee for Settlement Affairs-- is a vast project for the intensive coloniz-

\*To this, the Revisionists led by Jabotinsky (the political mentor of Menahem Begin and the Likud Party which now rules Israel) added almost all of the inhabited portion of what is now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.



ation of the West Bank and other occupied lands which envisages the settlement there of two million Jews over the next twenty years! The enormous Arab population which will remain under Israeli subjugation is to constitute a pool of cheap labor for Israeli industry and a market for its goods. Jewish colonization, economic subjugation of the Arab masses and Israeli military control of the occupied lands are the hallmarks of all of the "peace" plans now being discussed by the Israeli bourgeoisie. In this respect, the proposals of Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition Labor Alignment, for a "Federal Union" of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel, or such a union between Israel and Jordan, the "compromise territorial solution" proposed by Yigdael Yadin's Democratic Movement for Change which would return part of the West Bank to an Israeli dominated Jordan, and Begin's proposals for "autonomy" or "self-rule" for the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza under Israeli military jurisdiction, are all expressions of the imperialism of the Jewish state. Moreover, beyond the question of occupied lands, all factions of the Israeli bourgeoisie are determined to extend Israel's military hegemony and economic domination beyond the Jordan River to Hussein's desert kingdom.

The Zionist plans for a Greater Israel clash with the equally imperialistic aims of Damascus for a Greater Syria. Ever since the Emir Faisal was proclaimed king by the Syrian National Congress in 1919, the Damascene bourgeoisie has sought to create a Greater Syria which would include all of the present-day states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel! The bloody crushing of the PLO and leftist Lebanese National Movement by Syrian troops in 1976 (with the blessing of American imperialism) brought about Syrian hegemony over Lebanon as far south as the Litani River. Syrian aims of pushing further south, and establishing dominion over Jordan (in much the same fashion as she now dominates a prostrate but formally independent Lebanon) clashes not only with the imperialist aims of Israel but with those of Egypt as well.

Egypt and her new-found ally Saudi-Arabia are determined to jointly rule the Arab East or Mashraq as well as both shores of the Red Sea. Such an imperialist project requires the blocking of the plans for a Greater Israel or Greater Syria, either of which would challenge Egyptian-Saudi hegemony over the area. This is why Sadat greeted the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976 with proclamations of strong support for the PLO, the supply of considerable arms and ammunition to its fighting forces and the sending of Palestinian Liberation forces stationed in Egypt to Lebanon. And this is also why Sadat and Saudi King Khalid are determined that an independent Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and Gaza be closely linked to a Jordan which--with sufficient political, military and economic support -- would be able to resist subjugation by Israel or Syria.

#### WASHINGTON LEASHES THE SMALL IMPERIALISTS

American imperialism must now impose its

"peace" on the small imperialist states of the Middle East. No separate peace between Israel and Egypt (even one with Saudi assent) can constitute the basis for a Pax Americana in the region. Any settlement must also include Syria, or else Russian influence in Damascus would result in the outflanking of Turkey and Iran, on whom the US counts to imprison Russian imperialism in its Eurasian heartland. Similarly, the settlement which American imperialism demands must also include some sort of Palestinian state (undoubtedly ruled by some faction of the PLO) or else the Palestinian abscess will continue to fester, providing a beach-head for Russian intervention and leading the PLO to engage in a campaign of subversion of pro-American states throughout the Arabian peninsula using the Palestinian workers who make up an important part of their labor force as cannon fodder. The overall Arab-Israeli settlement, which alone can assure the exclusion of Russian imperialism from the Middle East, demands that the US impose restraint on the ravenous imperialist appetites of Israel, Syria and Egypt. The Jewish bourgeoisie will have to put aside its dreams of a Greater Israel, Damascus will have to shelve its plans for a Greater Syria, and Egypt and Saudi-Arabia will have to modify their scheme for undisputed hegemony over the Mashraq. The overwhelming economic, political and military weight of US imperialism is now being utilized to make Israel withdraw to its pre-1967 borders, make Egypt and Saudi Arabia accept the permanence of a powerful Jewish state in the Middle East, and make Syria content with domination over Lebanon. Out of the bloody rivalries of the small imperialists, American imperialism is trying to forge a powerful barrier to Moscow by ultimately joining Israeli technology, Saudi capital, the Syrian-Lebanese commercial network, and the masses of cheap Egyptian and Palestinian labor under its own direction.

#### RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM PLAYS ITS CARD

As the US moves nearer to the realization of a Pax Americana in the Middle East, Russian imperialism's sole hope of preventing Washington's triumph is to destabilize the region by fueling the fires of the imperialist rivalries of the small states and provoking a new Arab-Israeli war. Since Sadat's trip to Israel, Russian plans have focused on the formation of a "steadfastness front" with the PLO and Syria as its core, and which would include Algeria, Libya, South Yemen and Iraq. Apart from the bitterness of the Iraqi-Syrian rivalry for dominance of the Fertile Crescent, this front has foundered on Syrian unwillingness to break with American imperialism.

The PLO's March 11 raid into Israel and the invasion of southern Lebanon -- with its network of PLO bases -- which was Israel's response did not succeed in provoking a clash between Jerusalem and any Arab states. While Iraq attempted to send military supplies to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)



# eastern europe

## THE BRITTLE MASK OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The brittle mask of the bourgeoisie in Eastern Europe -- the mask done in the style of "socialist realism" -- is beginning to crack. It is beginning to crack because of the repeated upsurges of proletarian militancy which call into question all of the myths propounded by the ruling class. News slowly reaches us of a new wave of proletarian struggle throughout Eastern Europe in which the workers not only resisted the attacks of the bourgeoisie but at times took the initiative in the struggle through directly confronting the bourgeois state. The workers there are rising up, as are their class brothers throughout the world -- as one man -- in the first skirmishes of the growing class war.

In Yugoslavia last October, the city of Zagreb -- one of the most important industrial centers in the country -- was shut down by a tram drivers' wildcat in the middle of the morning rush. The strike caused great concern to the ruling class not because of the large losses in production which it caused but rather because it was organized outside of the unions, outside of party knowledge, and outside of the existing "self-management council" system which had been so laboriously constructed by the bourgeoisie for the purpose of dealing with proletarian militancy! In East Germany last October workers in Karl-Marx-Stadt closed down factories, following the advice of Karl Marx in spite of the claims of the East German bourgeoisie to be his "heirs". In Poland, only slightly more than a year after the explosive nation-wide strike of July 1976, the coal mines of five Silesian fields were closed down by the miners. As well, a strike by 3,000 workers in Pabianice could only be defused when a member of the ruling class' Central Committee arrived, fired the plant's management and gave in to the workers' demands.

By far the largest and most militant strike of the past few months occurred in Romania last August when close to 90,000 miners went on strike in the Jiu Valley, responding to the bourgeoisie's steadily building attack on its standard of living. The strikes which erupted at the same time in the Brasov textile mills and the "August 23rd" heavy machinery plant in Bucharest drove home to the bourgeoisie the possibility of a rapid generalization and further politicization of the workers' struggles, and they spared no time and effort to bring the miners' strike under control.

This was not the first time that the miners of the Jiu Valley have confronted the bourgeoisie; they still remember the experience of September 1972 when they downed tools and put forward their demands through an elected

strike committee independent of, and totally opposed to the bourgeois state's unions. At that time, they were protesting against the inadequate food supplies and abysmal housing conditions that existed as well as the constantly rising work norms and the new methods of wage payment which cut into real earnings. Even then they would not return to work until Ceausescu himself came to Petrosani to promise them improvements -- "improvements" that quickly evaporated!

Building proletarian militancy was temporarily defused in March of last year when the bourgeoisie used workers' concern over the plight of victims of the disastrous earthquake centered in Romania to put forward calls for "sacrifices for the emergency": lower wages; increased productivity; and increased "voluntary" labor. These myths were soon seen through, and the merciless manner in which this assault on the proletariat was implemented itself became a factor in heightening working class militancy. This militancy began to surface on August 1st when the miners of Lupeni went on strike against the state's new Pension Law, quickly gathering support from their fellow workers throughout the Jiu Valley.

The new Pension Law stated that all miners nearing retirement -- usually after 20-25 years of work in the mines -- would be given surface jobs during their last years of work, paid at 70% of their former salary, and that their pensions would be calculated on the basis of the new, lower wage! The life of a pensioner in any state borders on starvation, and the prospect of a substantial cut in the already meager pensions brought 6,000 Lupeni miners out on strike immediately. As the wildcat spread, Lupeni remained its hub, and of the 90,000 miners throughout the area who joined the strike, 35,000 poured into the small city. The continuous assemblies and discussions of the workers were in stark contrast to the usual grey, quiet state of the city; it had come alive and was bristling with activity! A strike committee was quickly elected, a list of demands drawn up and a delegation of workers was sent to the Grivitsa railway workers in Bucharest in an effort to generalize the struggles.

The demands put forward are themselves revealing of the harsh conditions that the miners faced. Aside from demanding an immediate abolition of the Pension Laws and a lowering of the retirement age to 50, the miners also demanded job security. This demand alone speaks volumes about the myths being spread by the left of capital that there is no unemployment in the "socialist" states of Eastern Europe. Against the increases in state control and regimentation of labor, the workers demanded the free



movement of labor throughout the state. Against the steadily deteriorating living conditions, they demanded immediate improvements -- in working conditions, in the level and quality of food supplies, and in housing -- and the introduction of the 6-hour day. Against the steadily escalating attacks of the bourgeoisie, the workers demanded the abolition of unpaid, compulsory labor -- "voluntary compulsory" as it is known in the Eastern bloc -- and the abolition of the fine system in production which regularly takes 20-30% of their wages. They also demanded the re-introduction of the "rights" they had supposedly won in 1955-57 which had totally evaporated. They spoke of the increase in the numbers of compulsory unpaid workdays, especially since 1965, coupled with cutbacks in housing, rising prices, and shortened paid holidays, which taken cumulatively show a huge increase in exploitation over the past years. Again, these demands leave nothing of the myth of a "workers' paradise":

Their demands were met with water hoses, and an increase in police patrols, neither of which dispersed the workers but rather worked to strengthen their resolve and to spread the strike. The Central Committee sent members Ilie Verdets and Gheorghe Pana to "negotiate" with the workers, but they were not well-received either. When they tried to address the assembled workers they had food thrown at them with the challenge that they should try to eat it. Not only were these two Central Committee members not allowed to speak, but they were even arrested by the miners and held hostage until Prime Minister Ceausescu came to hear them, cutting short his vacation on the "Eastern Riviera". In the meanwhile the militia that had poured into the area as a part of the bourgeoisie's plan to isolate the strike refused the order to go into the mines to break the strike, claiming they were "only soldiers". While they did not openly side with the workers, the militia's studied neutrality clearly revealed their loyalties. This was no doubt one of the reasons Ceausescu arrived as quickly as he did.

Although the workers would only talk to him, their "respect" was only for his power as the head of state whose word could not be bureaucratically overruled, as it could be with the other Central Committee members. As he ascended the platform to speak to the 35,000 workers assembled in Lupeni he was met with shouts of "Down with the 'proletarian' bourgeoisie!" The only avenue open to him in the face of the strike's strength and the "weakness" of the militia -- far more numerous than the loyal police forces -- was simply to give in to some of the workers' demands, concentrating on the Pension Law, and to promise no retaliation. Only then did the miners disperse.

The mine management was changed, and several ministers responsible for mining were also dismissed. Conditions improved for a few weeks, with better food available and some other minor demands met. But after this time retaliations began. The regular police

patrols as well as the Securitate patrols (the secret police) were doubled, and loyal troops ensured. Securitate men masked as new workers went down into the shafts. Some of the more militant workers were sent to various other districts to work, and some of the members of the strike committee were arrested. The "quarantine" of the area lasted until January 1st of this year.

On December 7, 1977, Ceausescu followed through on his promises to improve the workers' standard of living by announcing that he would lower the normal work week from 48 hours to 44, and also raise wages by 30%... but not now! In the same breath, he also called for eight more years of austerity and sacrifice before the Promised Land could be reached, discussing the situation of the workers and the nation's economic problems with the uncommon frankness and large quantity of crocodile tears so well known to workers in North America who have heard lay-off speeches before.

Order has returned to Romania; Lupeni is again silent and grey. But the tension is still felt in the air. It is a tension that is common in Eastern Europe today.

With every new upsurge of class struggle new cracks appear in the mask of the bourgeoisie, and the workers become clearer as to who their enemy is and how he battles, as well as learning the best manner in which to organize their own struggles. The development of class consciousness is a tortuous road, marked by defeat after defeat, for there is a qualitative difference between an understanding of the proletariat's existence in capitalist society and the understanding of how to overthrow capitalism which emerges from the class' struggles. The first step along the road is identifying the enemy, and the Romanian workers have no confusions on this point. In fact, their struggles "go for the throat": the entire state apparatus is confronted with the head of state being the only member of the bourgeoisie able to address the workers at all.

This is not particular to Romania either. The same situation arose in Poland in 1970-71 and in 1976 when first Gomulka and then Gierek and Jaroszewicz were forced to scurry from factory to factory attempting to restore capitalist order. In fact, the greater experience of the Polish bourgeoisie in dealing with the class struggle, and the steps they have recently taken in patching their crumbling mask, might possibly be examples which the Romanian bourgeoisie will follow in time.

Following a period of indecision for the Polish bourgeoisie as to what were the lessons it could draw from the explosive class struggle of July 1976 -- a period when consultations with the Russian bourgeoisie were also on the agenda -- they have recently made definite shifts in their policies. Gierek announced an amnesty on July 22nd which freed all workers arrested and convicted for "offenses" during the workers'



revolt, as well as all arrested members of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), headed by Lipinski and Kuron. KOR, which played such a vital part in derailing the class struggle and providing "critical" support for the bourgeois state, is now a permanent and tolerated organization. It has two regular newspapers which replace its previous ad hoc communiques: Robotnik (Worker), addressed to, and a "forum" for, the working class; and Głos (Voice) as the organizational paper. The Polish bourgeoisie has finally admitted to itself the usefulness of this type of organization which spreads confusion in the working class about the nature of its enemy.

That Gierek and the rest of the ruling clique are allowing the growth of KOR is beyond question. KOR simply could not exist without support from a substantial portion of the bourgeoisie, and especially its highest ranks -- such as the purported "Eurocommunist" tendency within the Party around Central Committee Secretary and Politburo member Stefan Olszowski. Further evidence of this fact is that Gierek first announced the amnesty not to the public, but in a message to his class brother, Lipinski.

Through the spreading of illusions about the

possibility of "independent" trade unions and the desirability of "workers' councils" in a "self-management" system -- the very policies which the Yugoslavian workers have been battling against for decades -- KOR advocates the development of capitalist barbarism "with a human face"! Through groups such as KOR, the bourgeoisie's crumbling mask will be held together...for now!

If one of the weaknesses of the proletariat's struggles in Poland is that those workers most adamantly opposed to the regime were easily mobilized behind the policies of KOR, and if one of the weaknesses of the Romanian workers' struggles is that members of the miners' strike committee voiced support for Paul Goma -- Lipinski's class brother in Romania -- then these must be placed alongside the strengths of these struggles. Whatever effective weapons the bourgeoisie develops to derail the class struggle will also come under attack from the proletariat in their turn. It is only through a series of defeats that the proletariat arrives at the final victory and it is only through confronting its confusions directly that the proletariat develops the consciousness necessary -- along with its autonomous organization -- for the final overthrow of the bourgeoisie...no matter what mask it wears.

--Z.

## cuba in africa: Russian 'Gurkhas'

The Cuban presence is growing throughout Africa, from Angola and Mozambique to Ethiopia. Behind the more than 26,000 Cuban military and civilian personnel in sixteen countries stands the Russian bear which underwrites the Cuban economy to the tune of \$1.5 billion per year. Some 23,000 of these Cubans are concentrated in Angola where without their presence the regime of Agostinho Neto would collapse. During February the number of Cuban military personnel in Ethiopia rose from a few hundred to 10,000. While it is clear that Cuba cannot supply shaky African regimes with an inexhaustible number of troops, the immediate effect of Cuban presence is to act as an instrument of Russian foreign policy in widening her influence in Africa.

The estimate of Cubans in Angola, as well as the distribution and use of such personnel, have been corroborated by all sources. The MPLA's extremely tenuous control over the country is constantly threatened by UNITA whose support is concentrated in the South among the Ovimbundu who make up 40% of the population. The continuing conflict has resulted in an 80% cut in diamond production and has left agriculture in such disarray that Angola must import over half its food. Despite heavy numbers of Cuban, East European and Russian advisers the economy is almost entirely dependent on Gulf Oil's operations in Cabinda for hard currency. These "American" oil fields, which yield the MPLA more than \$500 million a year in royalties, are guarded by several thousand Cuban troops.

What may have appeared once as temporary military aid now has the look of long term commitment. Cuban military effectiveness in Angola has prompted the U.S. concern over the build-up in Ethiopia. The venture in Ethiopia is part of Russia's concentrated effort to increase her influence in the important Horn of Africa. In the long run, if the Russians can stabilize their influence on both sides of the Red Sea (Ethiopia and South Yemen), Russian planes using Ethiopian bases would be within bombing range of the Strait of Hormuz through which much of the West's oil passes from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean. Ethiopia has additional significance as a symbol of African "independence" from European domination which might yield the Russian's political advantage in Africa. Russian military presence in the short run can affect not only U.S. plans for East Africa but U.S. plans for "peace" in the Middle East as well.

In short, to secure her aims Russia has delivered more than \$1 billion in military aid to Ethiopia. Starting last November 26th, Russia launched a massive transfer of weapons and technicians to Ethiopia, reported to be far in excess of immediate requirements. The massive air and sea lifts demonstrated Russian ability to quickly move arms to support "friendly" governments. Some of the 225 transport aircraft flew these missions without official permission over Egyptian, Yugoslavian, Libyan, Sudanese and Pakistani airspace. In the midst of these operations a military reconnaissance satellite, Cosmos



964, was launched which might have been used to control the overall exercise. The success of this operation has indicated that Russia has overcome earlier supply problems that had hampered restocking Egypt and Syria in previous wars.

Despite the massive aid supposedly involving the newest military hardware (tanks, surface-to-air missiles, artillery and fighters), the situation facing the Russian and Cuban military advisers is grave. Somali regular and insurgent forces controlled 1/3 of Ethiopia. Eritrean rebels control all but 5% of Eritrea. To boot, Colonel Mengistu's so-called Marxist Leninist government is far from firmly in control of the balance of Ethiopia. Executions of "counter-revolutionaries" grow. The army itself which is the base of Mengistu's power is filled with factionalism. The Russians needed military victories and quickly to prop up Mengistu's regime.

Originally Ethiopia had one of the most proficient and highly trained armies in Africa, boasting one of the best air forces. But many officers and non-coms acquainted with modern weapons supplied by the U.S. had been executed. Cuban and Russian military personnel face the problem of training raw recruits the use of sophisticated, death-dealing weaponry.

The decision to conduct the war in the Ogaden first has proved to be sound. To accomplish a quick victory over 100,000 Ethiopian soldiers were deployed against Somali regulars and insurgents numbering some 50,000. The Ethiopian troops were preceded by day and night aerial bombardment by MIGs and were accompanied in combat by Cubans and Russians. The Russians and Cubans provided technical support reaching all the way up to an imported Russian general. The plan worked. Before the Somalis were actually pushed out of the Ogaden, President Carter announced on March 9th that the Somali government would unilaterally withdraw its troops from the Ogaden.

The Russians have succeeded in securing this important victory in the Ogaden. The U.S. is posturing as a peace negotiator and demanding that all foreign troops be withdrawn from Ethiopia. The Russians have no intentions of leaving. They now face the more difficult task in quelling the Eritrean rebels. Top level Cubans have been quoted as saying that Cuban troops would not be used in that 14 year old struggle. The major question is whether or not the Cuban government can afford to refuse a Russian request for the use of Cuban troops.

The demand on Cuban military and technical support has heavy implications for Cuba herself. Cuban trade totalled \$6.48 billion last year of which 70% was with eastern bloc countries. (Prior to the blockade 70% of Cuba's trade was with the U.S.) To date Cuba is purported to have received more "aid" from Russia than any Latin American country has received from any source. The total Cuban debt to Russia is estimated at \$4.8 billion. If the purchase of Cuban sugar and nickel at above market prices and the sale

of oil at below market value is included the accumulated Russian "subsidy" comes to \$8 billion.

Roughly 60% of the annual sugar harvest goes to eastern bloc countries. The sharp decline in world sugar prices from 60¢/lb in 1974 to 7¢/lb last year forced drastic cutbacks in Cuban industrial development. Financial analysts believe that the Cuban economy hit rock bottom last year.

The facts illustrate the economic problem facing Cuba. Cuba's mainstay is Russia. On the other hand, Cuba needs to find more customers for sugar as well as suppliers for basic industrial needs. New International Sugar agreements which will set a minimum price of 11¢/lb could result in Cuba earning some \$300 million per year in trade with the west. The Cuban government hopes for a negotiated end to the U.S. blockade. This would allow Cuba to buy American goods, especially agribusiness equipment and technology, capital equipment, computers, rice and medicine, and hope to sell sugar to the U.S. American businessmen are already standing in line for the Cuban trade. The Cuban trade ministry has told the U.S. government that the U.S. could get as much as \$300 million/year from Cuba. (Total U.S. exports in 1976 were \$115 billion.)

The goal of opening U.S.-Cuban trade led Castro to promise through intermediaries last February that he would withdraw troops from Angola, which was the Carter government's condition for opening negotiations. Unfortunately for Cuba, Angolan dependency did not allow the withdrawal, indeed demanded a step up in Cuban presence there. Since the initial Carter government stand, Cuban presence in Africa has increased and is increasing still further. The substantial indebtedness of Cuba to Russia does not allow Cuba the luxury of backing out of the Russian bloc. On the other hand, the U.S. will hold the involvement in Africa as a block to normalization of Cuban-U.S. relations.

The other edge of the sword is the long term effects on the Cuban population of increasing and long term deployment of troops, civilian technicians and medical personnel in Africa. Almost 25% of the total Cuban armed forces of 110,000 are now in Africa, a situation which parallels the U.S. involvement in Vietnam at its high point. Cuban casualties in Angola are estimated at around 1000 men. Cuba has carefully composed military units sent to Angola from widely separated towns and provinces to minimize the local effect of casualties. Castro has made numerous speeches proclaiming non-existent economic prosperity and "proletarian internationalism". The repeated stress on the "low cost" of Cuba's African obligations is aimed at deflecting the growing dissent to the large expense in money and men. The Cuban working class may be indicating what it thinks of being the cannon fodder for Moscow's political plans in Africa, of being the "Gurkhas" of Russian imperialist plans.

E. Mett



## fifth estate

# On the Brink of Reactionary Socialism

The FIFTH ESTATE is a widely circulated newspaper in the libertarian milieu, published in Detroit.\* Within the last year this group has gone off the political deep-end, categorically rejecting marxism as a bourgeois ideology.

FE believes that marxism is an ideological prism through which one views a disjointed picture of reality. However, marxism is not a dogma, but a theoretical approach, a way of examining the unfolding of history from the working class perspective. Marxism is not a fixed doctrine, but on the contrary "undergoes constant elaboration in a direct and living relationship with the class struggle". (Platform of the ICC) The motor force of history, Marx understood, is the class struggle, the clash between classes defending their economic interests within the framework fostered by the development of the productive forces. And it is that struggle that will lead to the proletarian overthrow of capitalism.

FE concludes that marxism is a bourgeois ideology because it emphasizes the development of productive forces. "No one was ever defined as an element of production until capitalism", writes FE (Marx: Good By to All That, March, 1977). Apparently, FE believes that the serf was not part of the productive forces of society, that he did not labor from dawn to dusk to produce goods to support himself, his family and the feudal lords who exploited him, that the slave in Roman society was not a producer. It is FE that is viewing history through a prism and getting a disjointed view of reality. Marx is not to blame that he was the first to accurately describe what is and what has been the case in every exploiting society in human history and what will be until the proletariat has put an end to exploitation.

Comrade E.B. Maple of FE writes in a letter to the ICC that "antique social theory hobbles" the ICC's ability to perceive reality, but Comrade Maple, you have to do better than calling marxism "antique" if you want to convince anybody that marxism has no validity. The crucial question is whether class struggle is the motor force of history. If marxism is wrong, then the comrades of FE must put forth an alternative theory. What is the motor force of history?

FE's perspective is totally ahistorical. FE extols the Luddites who tried to resist industrialization by smashing their machines and derides Marx for saying that in that historical era it was the bourgeoisie that was revolutionary - proof positive that Marx was the ideologue for the industrial bourgeoisie! (Marx: Good By to All That) But what did the workers who smashed their machines stand for, what were they fighting

for? They were afraid of the future and wanted the security of the past, which was horrible but at least familiar. No one can avoid sympathizing with these people who saw their old way of life uprooted but it is not possible to believe that they were doing anything but hopelessly resisting history. Does FE think these workers were going to smash capitalism and establish socialism even before the industrial proletariat and the material basis for socialism were created?

Capitalism was progressive in that era because it developed the forces of production to unprecedented levels. No other society before capitalism experienced crises of overproduction. Capitalism also gave rise to the only class in history capable of destroying exploitation and class society forever - the proletariat. The period in which capitalism played this progressive role was its ascendant period. But when it reached the point that existing social relations became a fetter on the further development of the productive forces it passed into its decadent phase.

FE's position on unions is also ahistorical. The comrades see no process of development. It is all cut and dry; unions are good or bad. Unions were never revolutionary, never challenged the basis of capitalism (a point with which there is no argument). Therefore, FE concludes, unions were always evil.

"To talk about wage increases as victories only uses the language of capital. To transfer value from capital to labor only allows workers more money by which to purchase other commodities produced by other wage laborers. It certainly may have increased the standard of living of workers, but as revolutionaries I thought we were interested in the destruction of the law of value and the establishment of...a human community,"

writes Comrade Maple denouncing unions even in the ascendant period of capitalism. What did you want the workers to do, Comrade Maple, - abstain from living in society? The workers found themselves exploited and fought to defend themselves, generating demands for higher wages, shortened hours, an end to child labor, but FE would reject these struggles because they accepted the categories of capitalism. Whether FE likes it or not, these were the demands of the class struggle that pitted the interests of the workers against the bourgeoisie under the prevailing conditions of society.

Comrade Maple thinks the ICC's analysis of the periods of capitalism has some validity,

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but not when it comes to unions. FE's ahistorical, moralistic conclusion on the evilness of unions precludes that. And besides, he complains, the date, 1914, which the ICC focuses on is "mechanical". He is wrong.

When capitalism was in its ascendant phase it was an expanding system and it had the leeway to grant certain reforms and improvements in the standard of living of the proletariat. In the beginning of the 20th century the expansion of capitalism moved quickly to its apex. Beset by a crisis of overproduction and the saturation of the world market, capitalism entered its decadent phase. The only way one imperialism could acquire new markets was at the expense of a competitor imperialism. By 1914 this competition erupted into a global imperialist war whose aim was the redivision of the world market and the destruction of surplus product.

This war is the crucial turning point in the history of capitalism and the workers' movement. True, the seeds of betrayal by the unions were planted over many years. Bureaucratization, careerism and opportunism had undermined these organizations, but as long as capitalism was an ascendant system it could grant reforms and workers could make use of unions. With the outbreak of imperialist war the class lines were drawn up by history itself. Those who remained loyal to the principles of proletarian internationalism were on the one side and the chauvinists and class traitors on the other. The unions and the majority of the Second International crossed over the class line and organized the workers of the world to kill each other in the interest of the bourgeoisie.

In decadence, capitalism can no longer grant substantive reforms. Reformism itself is an historical impossibility since WW I and unions cannot be used to win reforms or improvements in the standard of living. In order for it to survive, capitalism in this period has shown a tendency towards state capitalism in every country on the globe. It takes different forms in the eastern bloc and the third world than it does in the west, but everywhere the chief tool of the state in keeping workers in line is the trade union movement.

FE does not understand how revolutionary consciousness develops. Defensive struggles are no good for these comrades because they accept the "language of capitalism", and revolutionaries are supposed to be in favor of destroying the law of value. But revolutionary consciousness develops in the course of these defensive struggles. Workers do not wake up one fine morning realizing "all we have to do is overthrow capitalism, destroy the bourgeois state and build a new society free from exploitation". The historical fact is that the working class struggles to defend its immediate interests - its wages, its benefits, its ability to purchase commodities because it has to survive. It does this because it lives under capitalism, a system which is always mercilessly attacking it, exploiting it more. Under decadent

capitalism, the struggle even for the most immediate defensive demands pits the class against the state because capitalism has nothing to offer any more. Whatever workers appear to win is immediately taken back by inflation, taxes, unemployment, speed-up etc. The class is driven to these defensive struggles by necessity. For capitalism, the unions are the first line of defense to limit these struggles so they do not develop towards their political conclusion.

This is where the role of revolutionaries is crucial, but FE cannot conceive of an organization of revolutionaries acting any differently than the Bolsheviks. They don't think revolutionaries can examine and learn from history, avoiding the mistakes and errors of the past. No, FE is above history; everything is good or evil. What the ICC says is that some segments of the working class come to a revolutionary understanding of the predicament of the class sooner than others, that these workers have the responsibility to their class to join together in an organization to convince their fellow workers of the understanding they have gained, and to continue to analyze the reality of the class struggle at every juncture. When the union hotshots come into the factory occupation and talk tough to regain control of the workers so that they can contain the struggle, revolutionaries have the responsibility to expose them as agents of capitalism and urge workers to spread their strike to other sectors of the economy.

FE's failure to understand how class consciousness develops through struggle and their moralistic revulsion for the "language of capitalism" will lead them to oppose the class struggle. When coal miners strike against their union because it introduces capital's austerity measures by cutting their medical benefits, will FE denounce them for accepting the "language of capital"? Or will they act as revolutionaries and participate in that struggle and try to explain the connection between this onslaught on their standard of living and the capitalist system? When workers wildcat because automation threatens their jobs (their ability to sell labor power and be exploited) will FE denounce them for accepting the "language of capitalism"? Or will they act as revolutionaries and participate in that struggle putting the workers' predicament in perspective, explaining how capitalism uses automation to optimize the rate of exploitation and cut labor costs to increase profits, rather than use it to benefit workers by reducing labor time and increasing the standard of living of all humanity?

No. Given their current perspective, FE will not intervene like revolutionaries. These comrades believe, "that the means of production are capital and their further development will only mean our further enslavement and capital's continued domination". (Marx: Good By to All That) To FE the enemy is not the capitalist class but the means of production. Probably, FE will call upon



the workers to destroy the factories and go back to the land. Unless the comrades of FE reverse themselves, the path they have embarked upon will lead them out of the workers' movement.

Jerry Grevin

## Wildcat: A BALANCE SHEET

The short-lived experience of the Wildcat group (1969-71) suffered greatly from the weight of fifty years of counter-revolution and the lack of organic ties to the revolutionary left of the 1920's and '30's. The group had no real appreciation of those left communist fractions that detached themselves from the Third International as it degenerated into a counter-revolutionary organization, and hence was unable to build upon the theoretical gains made by the revolutionary left.

Beset by a multitude of political confusions, Wildcat was nevertheless clearly in the proletarian camp. Its existence was an important development in the re-awakening of the proletariat. The lessons of the Wildcat experience (most of them negative) should not be lost to the workers' movement. If other proletarian groups elsewhere are needlessly condemned to similar errors and similar consequences, history would be repeating itself in a manner that would not be a gain for the working class, but a setback.

The Wildcat experience demonstrates clearly the dangers for groups that:

- don't have an adequate or accurate perspective on the nature of the period (decadence of capital);
- don't develop a clear and coherent program;
- fall prey to tendencies towards activism, workerism and localism;
- lack clarity on the need for regroupment of revolutionaries to take place on an international basis.

### CONTEXT AND ORIGINS

Wildcat should not be considered outside the historical context in which it arose. During the reconstruction period "boom" that followed on the heels of the devastation of World War II, there was a temporary lull in the class struggle. This lull gave rise to a variety of new leftist "theories" about the bourgeoisification of the proletariat and the rise of a "new" working class that found widespread adherence in the student milieu. But the reconstruction period terminated in the mid-Sixties. The reemergence of the open crisis of capitalism was accompanied by an attack on the standard of living of the working class, which, in turn, triggered a militant response from the proletariat. The dramatic heightening of the class struggle, as seen in the May-June Days in France, the Hot Autumn of Italy,

1969, and the rash of wildcat strikes in the United States, re-affirmed the fundamental tenets of marxism to any with eyes to see; the world working class had once again moved to center stage. The comrades who came together to found Wildcat had eyes to see; the name they chose for their organization and newspaper captured the prevailing spirit of the working class.

Wildcat came together on the basis of a common critique of American leftism, if only primitively developed. The comrades were clear on the primacy of the working class as the agent of social revolution. They understood that only the working class, because of its role in production and its nature as a non-exploiting class could overturn capitalism and organize a new society free of exploitation and oppression. They believed that all leftist organizations were, at best, hopelessly petty-bourgeois and contemptuous of the working class -- even if they mouthed certain tired "marxoid" cliches about the proletariat. These comrades found themselves in a world where unfolding events daily proved the validity of marxism, but where the "radical" movement was committed to essentially anti-proletarian politics. They recognized their responsibilities as revolutionaries to "go to the workers" with a revolutionary program -- not a "transitional" program; with revolutionary politics -- not clap-trap about "30-for-40" and escalator clauses. Their commitment to the class demanded that they talk to the class about the overthrow of capitalism, about the need for a revolutionary party and to attack the mystifications of Stalinism. They understood that the leftists would not do this.

Wildcat was born out of a commitment to put politics first. But it was not a homogeneous organization with a coherent political program. True, there was a "Where We Stand" published in each issue of the newspaper, but it was a minimum program of agreement of sufficient vagueness to allow disparate and basically incompatible political viewpoints to co-exist in the same organization -- for a time.

Initially, Wildcat was based in three cities -- New York, Chicago and Baltimore. The criteria for membership were agreement with the Where We Stand and a commitment to take a blue collar job. This workerism stemmed from an incorrect reaction to the left's isolation from the working class. What was wrong with leftists was seen as a lack of "commitment" and organic ties to the working class. In the logic of Wildcat, if you were "serious", you had to go to "work". The willingness to give up a comfortable career for the dirt and sweat of the industrial proletariat was a test of commitment, on the one hand, and a romanticization of revolutionary work, on the other. This workerist confusion which placed the emphasis on where one worked, rather than political positions defended, obscured the counter-revolutionary political basis of leftism, and was to have disastrous effects on the life of the organ-



ization.

Within a few short months, for example, a group of Trotskyists in Detroit who had broken with the Spartacist League, not on political questions, but on a working class organizing perspective, were admitted to membership. This step was both a reflection of the inadequate political development of the organization and a major contributing factor to its subsequent rapid decline. The admission of the Trotskyists, for whom the necessity to examine political reality had ended in 1938 with the Draft Programme of the Fourth International, stymied the further political evolution of the organization. Because Wildcat mistakenly did not allow signed articles, stories that ran in the newspaper generally reflected compromises hammered out at the editorial board. Political clarity and coherence suffered. The most politically advanced thinking was not to be found in the national newspaper, but in the internal documents and discussion, and in Wildcat Report, a monthly newspaper published by the New York section. In fact, the New York section was the most politically advanced in the organization, and constantly clashed with the Trotskyists over the unions, Russia and the political content of the newspaper and shop bulletins.

By June, 1970, the organization had so deteriorated that the NY group was expelled, though the reasons were never quite clear. The NY group thereupon tried to pull the wreckage together and went on to publish under the name Worker and Soldier, with an aim towards regroupment with other revolutionaries. But, still suffering from many of the weaknesses of Wildcat, the group soon disintegrated. What was left of the other Wildcat sections succumbed to the political hegemony of the Detroit Trotskyists, eventually re-named itself "Spark" and became the official American cheerleaders for the French Trotskyist group, Lutte Ouvriere.

In discussing the positive and negative aspects of the Wildcat experience, we will in fact be referring to the experiences of the New York section, which, as the most advanced, offers the most important lessons to the workers' movement.

#### POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

The experience of Wildcat was not totally negative. Far from it. The group struggled to confront the reality of capitalist exploitation and achieved some undeniable gains.

As elementary as it was, the re-affirmation of the working class as the agent of social revolution was such a gain, coming as it did in the midst of a swamp of new leftism, maoism, trotskyism, etc. Nor should one belittle the emphasis New York Wildcat placed on politics. Wildcat understood that politics came first. Above all, the responsibility of revolutionaries was to put forth the communist program. The problems

confronting the working class would be settled only by political revolution which would enable the proletariat to take the necessary steps to begin the re-organization of economic life. They understood the revolutionary responsibility to point out the general line of march in the ongoing class struggle. As one comrade wrote:

Their (revolutionaries') job is to point to the positive aspects and the implications of workers' combativeness *while showing why the fight must go beyond shop reforms to the seizure of all political power by the working class as a whole.* (WILDCAT REPORT #5, Sept. 1969, emphasis in the original)

This point of clarity enabled the New York group to avoid the pitfalls of economism or syndicalism in their shopfloor work.

But perhaps the clearest breakthrough for Wildcat was on the union question. Wildcat realized that unions act as a brake on the class struggle, that revolutionaries do not have the perspective of reforming or capturing control of the unions. "Though unions were originally organized by workers to defend themselves against uncontrolled exploitation," said the platform section on unions in the Worker and Soldier paper published by the New York section, "today they maintain exploitation and labor discipline...What is important now is the way millions are acting for themselves, by-passing the bureaucratic union structure in their fights for better lives. These kind of movements point the way to the future."

Another significant advance was on the question of state capitalism. Wildcat believed that there were no socialist or communist nations in the world today. The group rejected such concepts as "degenerated workers' state," "deformed workers' state," "bureaucratic collectivism," and denounced Russia, China, Cuba, etc. as state capitalist, totalitarian regimes brutally exploiting the proletariat of those nations.

There were still other areas where Wildcat re-affirmed revolutionary principles. Workers councils were seen as the historically determined form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Any form of substitutionism of the party for the class was categorically rejected. While advocating a defeatist position in regard to inter-imperialist war, the New York comrades did not fall prey to Third Worldism and support Stalinist movements.

On minority group oppression, Wildcat fought against racism, but rejected the various forms of "white skin privilege" theory and "affirmative action" which called upon the working class, white and black, to equally share the suffering imposed by capitalism, rather than advocating the revolutionary overthrow of the system which produces such symptoms as racism. The comrades believed that the problems of racism would only be solved by the workers themselves in the struggle to destroy capitalism and in the building of a new soc-



iety -- not by the intervention of the bourgeois state under prevailing capitalism, the very system that relies upon racism to keep the American proletariat divided against itself. The Where We Stand stated, in part: "We believe that black and white workers through their own organizations will solve the problems of racism, but only by fighting their common enemy. Capitalism tries to play black workers off against white workers, keeping them divided while it oppresses everyone."

While Wildcat was a positive reflection of the re-awakening of the proletariat, the group was beset with numerous confusions and inadequacies.

#### NATURE OF THE PERIOD

Wildcat had no theory of the decadence of capitalism. This was the most crucial shortcoming of all. True, the comrades all had a gut level notion that the era of reformism was dead and the age of revolution had arrived, but they lacked a coherent theory to explain the development of capitalism in the twentieth century and plan their activities accordingly. While Wildcat understood that capitalism had once been a progressive force, but no longer was, the organization had no theoretical framework with which to understand the development of class struggle and the unfolding of the revolutionary process.

Since World War I, when capitalism entered its decadent phase and lost its capacity to play any progressive role whatsoever in the further evolution of human society, mankind has been plunged into a cycle of crisis - war - reconstruction. This is not an American or a European phenomenon, but a world phenomenon, because capitalism is a world-wide system. To break this cycle which promises nothing but death and destruction for humanity, the world working class must take revolutionary action.

In the mid-Sixties the reconstruction period that followed World War II ended. Capitalism entered the next phase in the cycle -- the crisis of overproduction, a protracted period of deepening economic crisis. The bourgeoisie began its attack on the proletariat to make it bear the brunt of the crisis and the class struggle heated up as the proletariat fought back in self-defense. It was at this point in history that Wildcat came on the scene.

What does the future hold for the working class in this period? In the years to come the struggle will ebb and flow as the bourgeoisie momentarily retreats before the fury of an undefeated proletariat and prepares for new offensives against the workers. Eventually capitalism will be forced to move towards war -- its only solution to the crisis, as seen in World War II. The only barrier to a new and more destructive world war is the working class. During this struggle with the bourgeoisie, the working

class will sharpen its understanding, shed the illusions of bourgeois ideology, grasp the meaning of its strength and move towards revolutionary consciousness. But this process is not automatic. The participation of organizations of revolutionaries is a key ingredient.

With no theory of decadence, Wildcat did not understand the nature of the period. The group completely misjudged the sudden upsurge in working class combativity, believing that society was on the threshold of a revolutionary period.

This overestimation led to three errors: activism, workerism and localism.

Wildcat's activism should more accurately be termed hyper-activism or super-activism. Since the class was seen moving towards revolution, it was necessary for the comrades to act swiftly and spread the word, transmit the lessons of marxism and "raise" class consciousness so that the class would be prepared to execute its historic tasks. This small group of revolutionaries published a national newspaper and a local newspaper in New York once a month. Each comrade published a shop bulletin at his/her workplace once a month. There were regular contact meetings, education forums, study groups and early morning distributions at one another's workplaces as well as selected factories and industrial centers. At the same time, each comrade was holding down physically demanding industrial jobs and many worked heavy overtime schedules.

This frenetic pace took its toll. The internal life of the organization deteriorated, as the intensive activism led nowhere. Personality clashes and bickering were blown out of proportion and soon displaced political debate. Rather than deal with the inadequacies of the organization's political orientation, it was easier to scream and shout at each other. The comrades soon burnt themselves out and the organization disintegrated.

The second error was workerism. Originally, Wildcat's workerism was an incorrect reaction to the nature of the left. But there were other facets to the problem, too. Because they overestimated the immediacy of revolution, the comrades threw their energies directly into "recruiting" workers, and rejected intervening in the leftist milieu as a waste of time. By wrongly emphasizing sociological criterion (blue collar job) for membership, the group obscured the necessity for clarification of class lines and political perspectives as the real basis for a revolutionary organization. The organization isolated itself from revolutionaries who would not proletarianize and cut themselves off from political discussion which would have enabled them to sharpen their own politics.

Workerism led inevitably to localism. The bulk of political activity was not direct-



ed at the proletariat in general, but at the shops where the Wildcat members worked. Political questions were viewed with an eye towards winning over worker "x" or worker "y" "back in the shop" who evidenced an interest in revolutionary politics. Such a narrow perspective prevented the organization from visualizing their intervention in the class struggle beyond the confines of the shops the comrades worked in. This had the opposite effect of what the group had wanted to do in the first place. Rather than "spread" the word to the entire class, their audience was confined to a handful of workers at their jobs. As far as their impact on the class in general was concerned, workerism had led them into the dead-end of localism.

#### NATURE OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Wildcat had major confusions about the nature of revolutionary class consciousness and how the revolutionary program is developed. The comrades accepted the mistaken Leninist premise that class struggle does not give birth to revolutionary consciousness. According to this conception, the class struggle leads only to a militant trade union consciousness, a certain rebelliousness against the bosses; revolutionary consciousness must be brought from outside the class. (1) The non-proletarian backgrounds of Marx and Engels were cited as proof. The comrades did not consider that this contradicted their requirement that revolutionaries proletarianize themselves because they saw revolutionary theory enshrined in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and even the early Trotsky. Rather than subjecting contemporary reality to critical analysis, the comrades tended to view their task as the transmission of the lessons of classical marxism to the workers in a popular, readable style. Their task was to "raise" consciousness, not develop it.

But this is nonsense. Marx did not sit alone in the comfortable livingroom of a bourgeois mansion, twiddling his thumbs and dreaming up theories of revolution. His genius stemmed from his ability to examine the material reality of working class existence and draw the lessons of that experience. Revolutionary theory comes from the experience of the class and hence requires a constant critical examination of the development of the struggle against capital, making theoretical elaboration a chief task of revolutionaries.

This is not to imply that the New York comrades completely rejected theoretical work. Wildcat did see through leftist mythmaking and returned to the "basics" of marxism, and hence made some theoretical advances,

1) Another view expressed in Wildcat was that the communist program perhaps did not necessarily have to originate outside the class (as Kautsky and Lenin thought). Inasmuch as it already had been clearly formulated by Marx and Engels, the real task of revolutionaries was to take it to the class.

as on the unions and the Russian state. But the group did not take the step further to get a full grasp of the marxist method to develop a coherent analysis of the current period.

The impatience with theoretical elaboration that characterized Wildcat was closely related to the previously discussed confusion about the proximity of revolution that led to activism. After the split, the New York comrades tried to explore serious theoretical questions in the Pages of WORKER & SOLDIER, but these tended more to be re-writes of the works of Marx and Engels than fresh contributions to marxist science.

#### REGROUPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Especially after the split, the New York comrades saw the need for regroupment of revolutionaries. In publishing W&S, they planned to "provide a pole of attraction for isolated workers and servicemen ready to become involved in revolutionary socialist political activity," and to "emphasize the necessity for a united organization of all revolutionary workers and servicemen opposed to capitalism and for workers control of society which can move toward the formation of a revolutionary socialist party."

But the group had an inadequate understanding of how to achieve regroupment. Firstly, workerism was a barrier, putting an artificial sociological criterion ahead of political considerations. But more importantly, the group lacked clarity on the question of class lines, the basic fundamental principles for revolutionaries. The concept was not even in their vocabulary. Yes, they knew that Stalinists were not revolutionaries, but they were not clear on Trotskyists. Wildcat's critique of Trotskyism tended to be on an issue-by-issue basis -- on the unions, transitional program, the call for a "labor party", Russia, etc. Rather than denounce Trotskyism as a counter-revolutionary ideology, the operative assumption was that Trotskyism was just terribly mistaken. As previously mentioned, Wildcat was willing to work with Trotskyists even in the same organization. Even after the split, at least one avowed Trotskyist remained with WORKER & SOLDIER.

Wildcat was willing to regroup first and iron out programmatic issues later, which is completely backward. Regroupment requires 1) agreement on class lines and 2) agreement on perspectives and program. Because the proletariat is an international class confronting a world-wide enemy, regroupment must take place in an international framework, but Wildcat's vision was confined only to the United States.

Wildcat's attitude toward internationalism was exemplified by the spirit: we'll make the revolution here; you make it there. The need for mutual support, communication and cooperation with revolutionaries throughout the world was recognized, but not the necessity for one international rev-



olutionary organization. This was another serious short-coming.

The group's understanding of revolutionary defeatism suffered from this lack of international perspective. For example, the NY section ran an article in November, 1969 with the headline, "U.S. Defeat Means Workers Gain" in which they argued that a defeat in Vietnam would make the U.S. more hesitant to engage in imperialist adventures elsewhere, help workers to realize that the government is not responsive to the "people" but to capitalism and that "losing a war weakens the system responsible for it." The article went on to state:

WILDCAT REPORT supports the principle that every country has the right to be independent of foreign control, whether by the U.S., Russia or any other power. This is a matter of elementary democracy. *We are for the military defeat of every big government, including the U.S., which invades a small country, and that is exactly what the U.S. did in Vietnam.* (emphasis in original)

This position exhibits obvious confusions on the possibility of national self-determination in the period of the decadence of capitalism, but that is not surprising since the comrades did not have such a coherent outlook at the time. But more importantly, the position does not understand clearly that for the working class the bourgeoisie everywhere is the enemy -- in the "big" nations and the "small". The proletariat of the world has no interest in seeing the ruling class of one "small" nation achieve a change in the imperialist bloc it is allied with whether peacefully or by means of localized war, as in Vietnam. The logical conclusion of the statement "We are for the defeat of every big government...which invades a small country" is support for the bourgeois government of the small country, which is not revolutionary defeatism. Revolutionary defeatism means turning the imperialist war into a class civil war, the purpose of which is the destruction of the capitalist system itself. Revolutionaries never support proletarians of one country killing the proletarians of another -- big or small, democratic or fascist. The proletariat is one class that speaks many languages. "The workers have no fatherland." (2)

#### THE UNIONS

Developing in isolation from the re-emerging international movement, Wildcat had confusions even in those areas where it made great strides. For example, unions were identified as part of the state apparatus of capitalism, but Wildcat never took this analysis to its logical conclusion. The comrades did not know what to do with their own theoretical breakthrough -- how to ap-

ply it to reality. They were on the right track, but never realized the necessity to attack the unions frontally, to destroy the unions' ideological stranglehold on the workers' struggle. While rejecting union reform, "struggle groups" and forbidding its own members to hold union office, Wildcat searched furtively for a shop floor strategy. The comrades distinguished between revolutionary organizations and those that represented all workers engaged in struggle, and occasionally called for workers councils and strike committees to run the struggle, but the formulations were simplistic and naive, never dealing with the need to politicize and generalize the struggle throughout the class. Localism limited these conceptions to a framework oriented primarily towards the shops and companies where the comrades worked.

In day-to-day practice, there was a tendency to be soft on "indigenous" union reform groups as contrasted with those that were fronts for leftist organizations. Somehow "real" workers' continued faith in unionism was deemed less pernicious and was not attacked as vigorously.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Working class political formations struggling with the effects of the counter-revolution cannot be judged by the sum total of their political positions. Such groups must be seen in terms of their development -- where they are coming from and heading towards. In this light even the workerism of Wildcat marked a break with mainstream leftist politics. It was also a different type of workerism than that of leftists like the Trotskyists of the International Socialists who marched into the shops with a counter-revolutionary program and functioned as student radicals slumming in the proletariat. The Wildcat comrades considered that they were integrating themselves into the class, immersing themselves in the experience of the class. And though they had serious confusions on the nature of revolutionary consciousness, they at least understood that they were learning from the workers also. In their further evolution this recognition helped some of the militants to transcend the Leninist confusions that characterized their earlier perspective, and come to the position that revolutionary class consciousness is derived from the experience of the class. Unfortunately, it would take several years after the group's disintegration for that realization to take place.

What happened to Wildcat is a phenomenon facing other groups grappling with the question of revolution without organic ties to the best of the revolutionary tradition. All of the weaknesses of Wildcat, and other proletarian groups as well, are tied together. It is more fruitful to examine the common thread that underlies the mistakes, confusions and partial formulations, than to isolate and fixate on a check list of political "positions." It is more fruitful to the development of the workers' movement

2) For a complete discussion of the communist position on the national question, see NATION OR CLASS, an ICC pamphlet available from Internationalism for 95¢.



to understand the difficulties that stem from international and historical isolation, an incomplete grasp of marxist method and an inadequate understanding of the period. When confusions exist in these areas, the political positions that evolve are necessarily garbled, and come as no surprise.

With all its confusions and all its shortcomings, and these were numerous (this article has dealt only with some of the major ones), Wildcat was in the proletarian camp. The tragedy of Wildcat was that it did not move towards greater clarity, but disintegrated. For the working class, it was a worthwhile experience -- it is better that there was a Wildcat -- but it is not an experience worth repeating today.

The failure to make sense out of things offers three possibilities for such groups today: 1) to burn themselves out

2) to move towards leftism

3) to move towards political clarity.

This is precisely what happened to the Wildcat comrades and it will happen to others. Some Wildcat members have disappeared from working class politics altogether, seeking individual solutions or "escapes" from the exploitation and oppression of capitalist society. Others drifted into leftism and will be mired in that swamp forever, like the Detroit Trotskyists who dominate SPARK today. And still others have moved towards the politics of the International Communist Current, either as militants or close sympathizers.

The lifespan for proletarian groups like Wildcat tends to be exceedingly short. People either move towards clarity or things fall apart. Unable to deal with the reality of the world around them, these groups tend to turn inwards and consume themselves, which accomplishes nothing for the class-- which is the most important thing of all.

--Eric Fischer and Jerry Grevin

(The authors were members of Wildcat and Worker and Soldier, 1969-71)

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## MIDDLE EAST ...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

the PLO, and Libya and South Yemen called for massive armed resistance to Israel, Syria (which alone is a frontline state) both tolerated the Israeli occupation and supported the arrival of French and Iranian troops under a UN flag to demilitarize the area. Without Syria, any steadfastness front will be stillborn, and Russia can only try to compensate for the loss of PLO bases in Lebanon with the provision of new bases in distant East Germany and Czechoslovakia. But this only accentuates the extreme weakness of Russian imperialism as it desperately tries to re-enter the Middle East cockpit.

As the smoke clears from the bombed-out villages of south Lebanon, the next chapter in the bloody road to an American "peace" in the Middle East will not be long in unfolding.

--MAC INTOSH

# CORRESPONDENCE

INTERNATIONALISM endeavors to answer all correspondence as rapidly as possible. Correspondence which is of significant political consequence will be published in the magazine from time to time, so that all readers may benefit from the political discussion. Below are reprinted two letters. The first is excerpted from a longer note and was selected for publication because it raises the question of the practical application of the ICC position on trade unions to the organization of unorganized workers. The second letter discusses the causes of the decadence of capitalism.

To Internationalism:

(...I agree that) the only conclusion to be drawn today is that unions have become another arm of the bourgeois state. Not only must workers' struggles develop outside of the union apparatus but they must develop in opposition to the union apparatus. Unions, like all elements of the bourgeois state, depend upon the continued existence of wage labor. The liberation of the working class from the capitalist system of wage labor requires the complete destruction of the unions along with all other arms of the bourgeois state.

The above statement reflects my current understanding of unions based upon my reading and our discussions. However, applying that understanding to concrete situations shows me that it is still not really clear to me.

In a union strike situation you don't oppose the strike because it is merely economic but rather try to point out its limitations and what role the union plays in containing it to those limitations. But how about the situation where workers are unorganized and go on strike for union representation and the relative economic gains that can go with it? Should revolutionaries attack that strike because its victory means the further extension of a bourgeois institution or give it critical support meaning criticize the role of unions yet support the struggle because of the economic gains (wage increases substantially above cost of living increases) it could mean for the workers?

To be more specific, I work at a non-union warehouse with a pay scale ranging from \$2.50 to \$4.75/hour. Other warehouses in the area are union with a pay scale now over \$7.00/hour for everyone employed in the warehouses. There was one unsuccessful union organizing campaign in our warehouse three and a half years ago and there is the possibility of another campaign in the foreseeable future. How do you relate to this situation? Granted you point out the real role of unions but when it comes down to a NLRB election do you abstain or vote against a measure which could double the wages of the average employee? I understand that getting a union con-



tract would mean speed ups and lay offs and could even mean a permanent shutdown of the warehouse. But at this point the only struggle that could mean any economic gains (if doubling your wages is a gain) for workers at that warehouse would be the struggle for a union contract. I can't really see any justification for getting involved in a union organizing campaign given the fundamental class nature of unions but I am not at all clear about how to relate that to fellow workers who see the possibility of doubling their wages through a union.

S.A.

ICC replies:

You specifically ask about the role of revolutionaries in a situation where it is a question of unionizing hitherto unorganized workers, and where unionization would, at least in the short-run, raise wages. It is important to answer this question, and to be absolutely clear that unorganized workers are not "an exception", that their unionization is a victory for the bourgeoisie. And this is all the more important as the bourgeoisie in the U.S. prepares, through Carter's proposed reform of the labor code, to extend the "benefits" of unionization to the still unorganized mass of American workers (particularly in the south and west).

The immediate economic impact of unionization as can be seen in the lettuce fields and vineyards of California where Cesar Chavez' UFW organized the mass of farmworkers is rationalization, the lay off of a considerable part of the work force, and the intensification of labor, speed-up, for those workers who remain. The result, despite higher wages (which inflation and dues payments quickly erode) is a fantastic rise in the rate of exploitation of the labor force, a rise in the rate of surplus value which, together with the unemployment which accompanies it, constitutes a defeat for the working class even in terms of its immediate economic interests.

It is particularly big capital which can turn unionization and the higher wage rates which usually immediately result to its economic advantage through rationalization of the labor process and the intensification of exploitation, thus more than wiping out the effects of higher wages. Small and medium sized capital, with its lower organic composition of capital, and whose very existence and capacity to compete with big capital depends on lower wage rates than prevail with unionization is a second victim of the organization of the unorganized. Thus unionization accelerates the concentration and centralization of capital, the destruction of the small capitalist by the big, the advance of monopoly and statification, all of which result in the more ferocious exploitation of the proletariat.

To this must be added the fact that with unionization, real struggles of the workers,

struggles which have the possibility of generalizing and politicizing, become more difficult. Unionization means a proven instrument with which the bourgeois state can discipline the working class and divert struggles when they begin. Unionization means a new and potent apparatus of intimidation and control of the workers by the capitalists on the shop floor itself.

But it is not simply in terms of its immediate or even longer term economic impact that unionizing the unorganized must be judged. It is the political impact of unionization that most concerns revolutionaries. By its encouragement of localism, corporatism and nationalism within the class, by its strengthening of these barriers to the unification of the proletariat, unionization is an important political weapon of capital. This aspect of its anti-working class function can be seen in the squads that the UFW has set up to patrol the Mexican-American border and prevent workers from crossing over to the U.S.. Unionization ideologically and physically binds the working class to the state, which in the epoch of imperialist world war or proletarian revolution is the necessary condition for the bourgeoisie to impose its solution to the crisis. Thus it is on the political terrain, in terms of its class consciousness and its autonomy, that unionization inflicts the greatest defeat on the class.

It is the task of an organization of revolutionaries to articulate this perspective, to propagandize and agitate on this basis, wherever the question of unionization of the unorganized is posed. It is only in this way that the tremendous - though embryonic and still politically unformed - combativity and militancy of workers in such a situation can become the basis for a real defense of their immediate interests and the springboard for a generalization and politicization of the struggle. Failing that, this combativity will be directed into a struggle for unionization, that is to say, into a crushing defeat for the workers both in terms of its immediate economic effects and its political results.

While the actual physical intervention of an organization of revolutionaries in a situation where unionization is on the agenda is conditioned and determined by a whole complex of factors, where such an intervention is decided on, it is the above perspective which would guide our activities.

Fraternally,  
INTERNATIONALISM

To Internationalism,

I received the copy of "The Decadence of Capitalism" that you sent me. The purpose of this letter is not to present an exhaustive critique, but rather to give you a few general comments that I have about the analysis.

I thought that the analysis of the general



concept of decadence, its causes and manifestations was quite good; especially the inter-connection drawn between the historical development of capitalism and the pre-capitalist societies, plus the analysis of the super-structure of capitalism.

However, I'm afraid I have some reservations about the general tone of the analysis on the origins of decadence. The entire analysis is based on Luxemburg's analysis of the accumulation of capital. I feel this is a mistake, as I disagree with Luxemburg on this question.

I quote..."The conclusion of this analysis is that capitalism's historic decline commences at the point where there is a relative saturation of pre-capitalist markets, that capitalism is...the first mode of economy which is unable to exist by itself, which needs other economic systems as a medium and soil. Although it strives to become universal, and indeed on account of this tendency it must break down - because it is immanently incapable of becoming a universal form of production."

In my mind, the above quotation is the key to the entire analysis of when and why decadence occurs. Luxemburg's contention that capitalism cannot exist without 'third party buyers' heads her, and it follows, heads the pamphlet into the fatal error of basing capitalism's historic decline on the relative saturation of pre-capitalist markets. It just ain't so!

I agree with Bukarin's critique of Luxemburg's analysis of the accumulation of capital, and feel that he points out quite clearly her major mistakes. Unfortunately Bukarin never went beyond Lenin's concepts of imperialism and the nature of the crisis, with which I disagree. Bukarin's theoretics are fine, but for whatever reasons, could never bring himself to break from the holy writ of the Master.

I am currently re-evaluating my position of this question. While I don't think that Luxemburg was correct, I also don't think that Grossman-Mattick were correct either. Actually I feel that the truth lies somewhere in between. I don't see a dichotomy between falling rate of profit and saturation of markets, though my definition of saturated markets is different than Luxemburg's.

T.S.

The ICC replies:

For us, "the decadence of capitalism is the product of the development of the internal contradictions inherent in the relations of capitalist production..." (International Review #5, p.6), which expresses itself in "...the transformation of these relations into a greater and greater fetter on the development of the productive forces". (Ibid): the decadence of capitalism is nothing but the permanent crisis of the capitalist mode of production, some of the ram-

ifications of which we will treat below.

The political principles, the strategic and tactical guidelines which constitute the theoretical arsenal of the proletariat, have their bases in a clear understanding of the epoch in which the working class is living. It is only through a recognition of the decadence of capitalism, and all its implications, that the proletariat can orient its struggles in the present epoch, that it can grasp the counter-revolutionary role of trade unions, elections, frontism, national liberation, self-management, partial struggles, the so-called workers' parties, etc. In this sense our analysis of the decadence of capitalism is one of the most important foundations of the platform of the ICC. But an understanding of the decadence of capitalism, and its ramifications for the conditions of proletarian struggle, is inseparable from a comprehension of its economic bases; and however difficult this may be for individual comrades, such an understanding of the bases of decadence is an absolute necessity for an organization of revolutionaries. Indeed, the political morass (or worse) into which those revolutionaries who failed to understand the irreversible decline of capitalism, its permanent crisis, were led is eloquent proof that the importance which the ICC gives to this question is not misplaced. Thus, Amadeo Bordiga's analysis of Mao's triumph in China, his conviction that "the bourgeois revolution in China has come on time on its continental area, as did the French Revolution" ("Stalin-Malenkov: topa, non topa", Il Programma Comunista, 6/1952), and his conclusion that "the political struggle of the 'four classes' is an element contributing to victory in the international communist struggle, even if its immediate result is the establishment of national and bourgeois forces" (Genoa conference of the ICP, 1953) is rooted in his complete inability to understand the decadence of capitalism. For the same reason, Bordiga, in discussing the impact of a possible third inter-imperialist butchery, could say that one result might be a capitalism which "relives its whole life by transforming itself from a foul hag into a new born rose" (Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi). Similarly, Anton Pannekoek's theory that China in the 1940's was on the threshold of a national and bourgeois revolution which would lead to an epoch of capitalist development of the productive forces (c.f. his Workers' Councils), is but the other side of the coin of his rejection of capitalism's permanent economic crisis, as expressed in his critiques of Luxemburg and Grossman.

With respect to the economic bases of capitalist decadence, your letter implies that our analysis does not take into consideration the fall in the rate of profit. Quite the contrary! Our platform states:

Moreover, the growing difficulty encountered by capital in finding a market for the realization of surplus value accentuates the fall in the rate of profit,



which results from the constant widening of the ratio between the value of the means of production and the value of the labor power which sets them in motion. From being a mere tendency, the fall in the rate of profit has become more and more concrete... (International Review #5, p.6)

Our analyses do not ignore the fall in the rate of profit, nor the impact of saturated markets and falling profit rates on each other. Meanwhile, however, your own analysis of the economic bases of decadence remains obscure to us, and we are very interested in the direction your current re-evaluation of your positions leads.

Concerning your comments on Rosa Luxemburg's analysis in The Accumulation of Capital, which are limited to a blunt "It just ain't so!", we must say that a question of such importance requires far more in the way of criticism. It is impossible to respond to arguments and analyses that have not been made; but we can indicate our disquiet about your acceptance of Bukharin's critique of Luxemburg. While one should not accept Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the objective barriers to the accumulation of capital, and their consequences, just because it leads to revolutionary political positions, one cannot properly evaluate Bukharin's critique of Luxemburg without taking account of his political positions. Bukharin, as he makes clear in his conclusion to Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital, was determined to show that Rosa Luxemburg's analysis results in:

1. Incorrect position on the national question;
  2. Underestimation and incorrect position on the colonial question;
  3. Underestimation and incorrect position on the peasant question.
- (pp.269-270)

Indeed, Bukharin was intent on demonstrating Luxemburg's theoretical mistakes so as to attack her practical-political positions, or to put it another way, so as to provide a theoretical (sic) underpinning for the Stalinist-Bukharinite policy of support for national liberation struggles, colonial wars of independence led by the bourgeoisie, and the petty property of the peasantry as a social basis for the construction of socialism (even as Luxemburg's critics in the SPD had originally attacked her Accumulation so as to defend their reformist, gradualist and social-imperialist positions). Throughout this period Bukharin was putting forward the theory of capitalist stabilization, which justified the policies of the Stalinist state and the Stalinized Comintern, and his criticisms of Luxemburg were the other side of the coin of his commitment to socialism in one country.

Remember that Bukharin does not confront Luxemburg with another analysis of the decadence of capitalism, with an alternate theory of permanent crisis, but with a Hilferdingian theory of "organized capitalism" which sees what has become the normal capi-

talist system "...revealing the staggering wonders of technological progress, transforming scientific knowledge...into a powerful level of technological revolution". (quoted in Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, p.255) If Bukharin's earlier analysis of state capitalism (Imperialism and World Economy, 1915) owed much (too much) to Hilferding, it had at least put its emphasis on what it frankly saw as the catastrophic side of this phenomenon. The theory newly articulated in the 20s, however, emphasized the "rational organization", the "rationalization" of economic life - a theory which was consistent with Bukharin's belief in capitalist stabilization in the metropolises and "anti-imperialist" revolutions, that is peasant wars, in the colonies and semi-colonies. Bukharin's criticisms of Rosa Luxemburg were inextricably linked to these conceptions, and this should at least temper ones eagerness to accept them. Moreover, Bukharin's failings are not at all merely that he "never went beyond Lenin's concepts of imperialism and the nature of crisis" (which in any case are more descriptions than analyses), but lie in a political and theoretical perspective which owes more to Lenin's Social-Democratic opponents than to Bolshevism.

An organization of revolutionaries must have a theoretical analysis which explains the differences between the ascendent and decadent phases of capitalism. However, no theoretical explanation is written in stone. For example, Accumulation held out the possibility that the armaments industry might replace third buyers. One of the chief motivations in writing the pamphlet, The Decadence of Capitalism, was to prove that armaments, far from being a solution for decadent capitalism, are actually a major drain on the national economy being paid for out of the surplus value generated by the productive sector. The working class and its revolutionary expressions are constantly involved in re-evaluating the historical experiences of the class to provide a firmer foundation for understanding the problems which face the class today and will face them in the future.

We now want to briefly indicate the ramifications of the decadence of capitalism which we consider to be absolutely fundamental, and the significance of which we can grasp because of our conception and analysis of capitalism's permanent crisis:

1. for the world capitalist economy, permanent crisis manifests itself in an unrelenting cycle of open crisis, war, reconstruction, new crisis, etc., and its concomitant, state capitalism, the absorption of civil society by the leviathan state;
2. for the bourgeoisie, decadence manifests itself in state totalitarianism, in the militarization of society (economic, political and ideological) and in a pre-occupation with the vocation of war;
3. for the proletariat, the permanent crisis of capitalism manifests itself



in militarization both at the point of production and in all other aspects of its existence, in the end of the possibility of durable reforms and in a decline in its working and living conditions;

4. for revolutionaries, the decadence of capitalism means the end of any distinction whatsoever between the minimum and maximum programs, and organization for theoretical, propagandistic and agitational work (the precise weight given to these elements depending on the international balance between the classes prevailing at a given moment) based exclusively on the perspective of war or revolution.

We want to add here what ramifications the decadence of capitalism does not have:

1. permanent crisis does not mean that the defensive or economic struggles of the working class are bourgeois or that a class which engages in them is - even at that moment - a class-for-capital;
2. decadence does not mean that proletarian revolution is possible at any moment: both the particular phase within the cycle of decadent capitalism and the international balance between the classes (which includes the capacity of revolutionary organizations to carry out their tasks) are decisive in determining whether or not there will be a revolutionary confrontation.

Fraternally,  
INTERNATIONALISM

## ICC Exposes LRP's Phoney Theory

The League for a Revolutionary Party is a Trotskyist organization which holds a position that Russia is state capitalist. The LRP theory, cloaked in anti-Stalinism and "pure" Trotskyism, has appeal to some individuals in search of a genuinely proletarian political perspective. However, stripped of its jargon, the LRP theory is fallacious and actually a defense of Stalinism. Recently, the LRP gave a presentation of this theory at a public forum sponsored by the Marxist Education Collective in New York City. Comrades of the ICC intervened at this meeting to expose the counter-revolutionary nature of the LRP.

According to the LRP, Russia only ceased to be a "workers' state in 1936-38, with the purge trials and the supposed defacto end of central planning (no real third Five Year Plan). All this is merely an apologia for Stalinism, counter-revolution and Russian imperialism, whose triumph and consolidation had been completed many years earlier, and which the LRP celebrates when it says, "The great industri-

alization of the Soviet Union in the 1930's... was only possible because the Soviet Union remained a workers' state." (SOCIALIST VOICE, No. 2, P. 26)

What are the real criteria which revolutionaries can use to evaluate the class nature of a regime which emerges from a proletarian insurrection?

1) The proletarian revolution must be an international revolution, and the primary task of the working class in power in any one country is to extend the world revolution; all strategy and tactics must be determined on this basis;

2) The proletarian revolution is firstly a political question -- the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the organization and consolidation of the political power of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat through its workers' councils and workers militias;

3) The political power of the proletariat, its class dictatorship, is the sole basis on which it can begin to make despotic inroads on the capitalist relations of production (law of value, market, money, etc.) which continue--in varying degrees -- to exist in the period of transition; "The proletarian revolution undertakes an economic transformation of society from a political point of departure -- the dictatorship of the proletariat..." (INTERNATIONAL REVIEW No. 3, p. 8). Once the armed struggle with the bourgeoisie (internal and external) permits the proletarian dictatorship to move beyond an economic program determined solely by the needs of civil war, the working class must take steps to increase its consumption, reduce the length of the working day and the intensity of labor, and overturn the prevailing capitalist relation of dead to living labor (the production of the means of consumption must grow faster than the production of the means of production). This is the only economic program which is consistent with a transition to socialism.

We can now judge the LRP's claim that the class nature of the Russian regime remained proletarian until the late 1930's.

The LRP insists that the regime which proclaimed its commitment to "Socialism in one country" (1924), which brought Russia into the concert of imperialist states, the League of Nations (1934), and forged the Franco-Russian military alliance (1934), and which throughout this period sought to isolate and crush autonomous workers' struggles while using its Stalinized Comintern to everywhere subordinate proletarian struggle to Russian national interests, was proletarian in nature!

The LRP insists that the regime which emasculated and destroyed the soviets, the very organs of the dictatorship of the proletar-



iat, which disbanded the workers' militias, and which systematically utilized all the instruments of violence against the working class, was proletarian in nature!

The LRP insists that the regime which ruthlessly cut the consumption of the working class, while extending the length of the working day and increasing the intensity of labor to the breaking point (Stakhanovism, forced labor), and which consolidated the domination of dead over living labor in the most barbarous fashion precisely through its Five Year Plans, was a proletarian regime!

What the LRP proves with its apologia for Stalinism is not the proletarian class nature of the Russia of the Five Year Plans, but the bourgeois nature of the organization which dares to make such assertions in the name of marxism .

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

INTERNATIONALISM regularly holds public meetings in New York City and Toronto to discuss issues which are of vital importance to the revolutionary working class movement. These meetings provide a means by which the ICC can intervene publicly to spread the influence of the revolutionary perspective in the class struggle. The meetings also provide an opportunity for people searching for coherent revolutionary politics to discuss and debate with the organization.


Upcoming topics include:

- Terrorism and Repression
- The French May -- A Decade Later
- Class Struggle in the U.S. --the Way Forward.

In addition, the organization holds regular Roundtable Discussions where people interested in the politics of the ICC are invited to discuss topics of particular interest on a less formal basis.

For the exact time and place of these meetings, readers are advised to write to either, INTERNATIONALISM, P.O.B. 961, NY, NY 10027, or P.O.B 328, Station D, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

**icc pamphlet no2**



"All the post-war developments have amply proved the falsity in this era of the tactic of giving support to national liberation movements in order to weaken imperialism. Far from weakening imperialism, these movements only serve to tighten its grip on the world, and to mobilize sections of the world proletariat into the service of one or another imperialist bloc."

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# Basic principles of the International Communist Current

The ICC traces its origins in the successive contributions of the Communist League, the Ist, IInd, and IIIRD Internationals, and the Left fractions which detached themselves from the latter; in particular the German, Dutch, and Italian Left.

Today the ICC defends the following basic positions, fundamental lessons of the historical struggle of the working class:

- Since World War I, capitalism has been a decadent social system which has nothing to offer the working class and humanity as a whole except cycles of crises, wars, and reconstructions. Its irreversible historical decay poses the single alternative for humanity: socialism or barbarism.
- The working class is the only class capable of carrying out the communist revolution against capitalism.
- The revolutionary struggle of the proletariat must inevitably lead the working class to a confrontation with the capitalist state. In destroying the capitalist state, the working class will have to set up the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale.
- The form of this dictatorship is the international power of the workers' councils.
- Socialism, the mode of social reproduction initiated by the workers' councils, is not 'workers' self-management' nor the 'nationalization of the economy'. Socialism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations such as wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers; it means the construction of a world human community.
- The so-called 'socialist' countries (Russia, the Eastern bloc, China, Cuba, etc) are a particular expression of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself an expression of the decline of capitalism. There are no 'socialist countries' on this planet and the above countries are just so many capitalist bastions which the world proletariat will

have to destroy along with all the other capitalist states.

- In this epoch the trade unions everywhere are organs of capitalist discipline within the proletariat.
- All the so-called 'workers' parties' (the 'Communist' and 'Socialist' parties, as well as their leftist appendages) are the left of capitalism's political apparatus.
- In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but sources of capitalist mystification; any participation in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce this mystification in the eyes of the proletariat.
- Today all factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. Any tactics which call for 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' or 'united fronts' between the proletariat and any faction of the bourgeoisie can only serve to derail the struggle of the proletariat and disarm it in the face of its class enemy.
- So-called 'national liberation struggles' are moments in the deadly struggle between imperialist powers large and small to gain control over the world market. The slogan of 'support for people in struggle' amounts in fact to defending one imperialist power against another, under nationalist or 'socialist' verbiage.
- The role of the revolutionary organization is not to 'organize the working class' nor to take power 'on behalf of the workers', but to participate actively in the generalization of proletarian struggles and revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat.

## THE ACTIVITY OF THE ICC:

The vital theoretical elaboration demanded by the re-awakening of the proletarian struggle after fifty years of counter-revolution.

Organized intervention, on an international scale, in the struggles of the proletariat in order to contribute to the process which leads to the self-organization and revolutionary action of the working class.